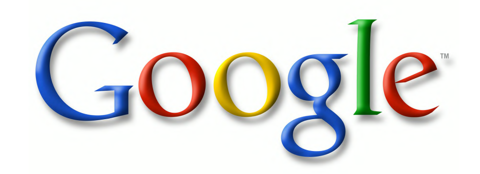
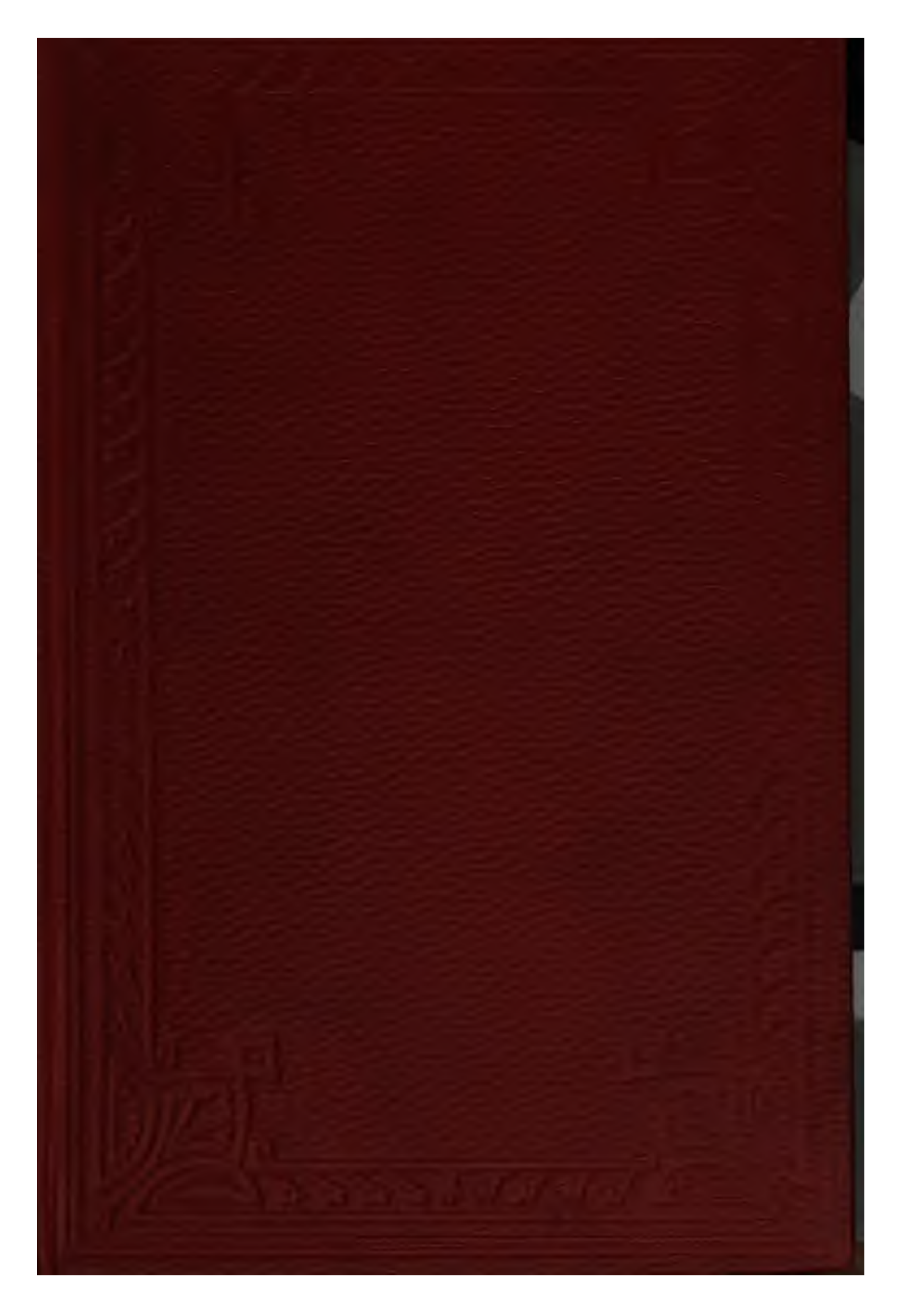
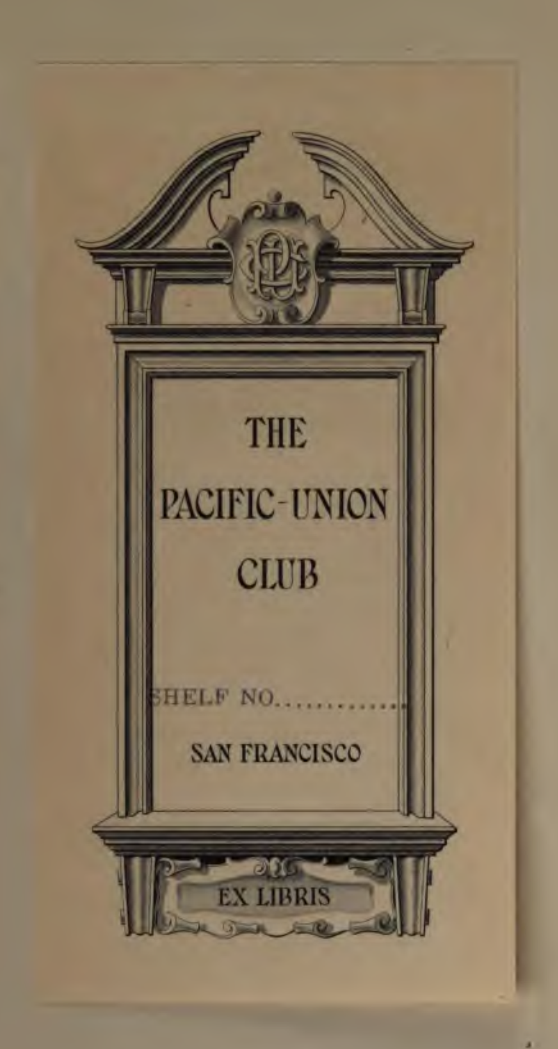





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ARIADNÊ

De La Ramée, L

ARIADNÊ

THE STORY OF A DREAM

BY

OUIDA, pseud

"La forza d'Amore non risguarda al delitto"



A NEW EDITION

LONDON
CHATTO & WINDUS
1904

À MON AMIE,

DONNA ADA COLONNA,

LA DUCHESSE DE CASTIGLIONE,

CONNUE DANS LE MARBRE COMME

"MARCELLO;"

QUI, À TOUT LE CHARME DE LA FEMME, A SU RÉUNIR

LA FORCE DE L'ART.

ARIADNÊ.

CHAPTER I.

"It is an Ariadnê, of course it is an Ariadnê. A Bacchus?—pooh!" I said over and over again to myself, sitting before it, in the drowsy noon, all by myself in the warm summer weather; for the porter in the hall yonder was a friend of mine, and often let me in when the place was closed to the public, knowing that I was more likely to worship the marbles than to harm them.

It was intensely still.

Outside, the sun was broad and bright upon the old moss-grown terraces and steps, and not a bough was stirring in the soft gloom of drooping cedar and of spreading pine. There was one of the lattice casements open. I could see the long lush grass full of flowers, the heavy ilex shadows crossing one another, and the white shapes of the cattle asleep in that fragrance and darkness of green leaves. The birds had ceased to sing, and even the lizards were quiet in these deep mossy Faunus-haunted ways of beautiful Borghese, where Raffaelle used to wander at sunrise, coming out from his little bedchamber that he had painted so prettily with his playing gleeful Loves, and flower-hidden gods, and nymphs with their vases of roses, and the medallions of his Fornarina.

"It is an Ariadnê," I said, sitting in the Cæsars' Gallery—that long, light, most lovely chamber, with its wide grated casements open to the woodland greenness, and the gleam of the brown weed-laden waters, and the leaf-tempered glory of the golden sunlight.

Do you know the bust I mean?—the one in bronze on a plinth of flowered alabaster, with a crown of thickly woven ivy leaves on its clustered hair? It is not called an Ariadnê here in Villa Borghese; it is called a young Bacchus; but that is

absurd. It might be Persephone or Libera, but to my thinking it is an Ariadnê.

It has a likeness to that Ariadnê of the Capitol, which has been called a Bacchus and a Leucothea; and it has something of extreme youth, of faith, of hope, of inspiration, which is very beautiful, and is all its own. Go you, traveller, and see it where it stands, with all the bestial, bloated, porphyry emperors around it, and the baby Hercules in his lion-skin hood in front of it, and you will see that I am right: only it is an Ariadnê, mind you, before the abandonment on Naxos.

There is a Bacchus here—nay, there are many—but there is one in this Gallery of the Cæsars that is perhaps the most beautiful ideal of the Homeric Dionysos in the world, and it stands here, too, in this room of the Cæsars. Do not confound him with the Bacchus of the Vestibule; that is a finer statue, maybe, since more famous; but a far lower deity; indeed no deity at all for anything that his eyes say of soul, or that his mouth breathes of creation; but this Bacchus, younger also, is all a god; the true Dionysos ere the Asiatic and Latin adulterations corroded the Greek conception of his person and his office. He is the incarnation of youth, beneath whose footfall all flowers of passion and of fancy arise, but youth with all the surprise of genius in it, and all its strength:—its strength, and not its weakness, for he is divine, not human; he rejoices, but he reigns. Looking at him, one knows how far sweeter it must have been to have been old when the world was young, than it is now to be young when the world is old. "You Greeks are for ever boys," said the Egyptian to Solon. But now, "*nous vieillards nés d'hier*" is the bitterest and truest epithet for us.

Then there was childhood even in the highest godhead.

Now the very children are never young.

This Bacchus and my Ariadnê stand close to one another; ever near, yet never meeting, like lovers parted by irrevocable wrong.

I sat and looked at them for the hundredth time; and I thought, if only the old myths could but have been kept pure, they had never been bettered since Pan's pipe was broken. One could wish Euhemerus had never been born: it was he who spoilt them first.

"It is an Ariadnê—certainly an Ariadnê," I said to myself. Maryx, the great sculptor, had laughed at me for saying so, but he had gone into some other of the chambers, and had left me of the same opinion still.

The warmth was great; the stillness perfect; the air was sweet with the smell of the woods and of the cattle's breath. I had slept but little that night, having found a fragment of a book which I thought bore marks of the press of Aldus, and, sitting until near dawn over my treasure in effort to verify it with a dear and learned monk I knew, I had been still up when, with the first light on the earth, the nightingales ceased a little, and the thrushes and merles took up the story and began a riot of song above me in the woods on the hill of Janus. So now I was drowsy as the day was.

Noon is the midnight of the South. Deep dreams and peace fall upon all creation. The restless lizard pauses and basks, and even that noisiest denizen of summer sunshine, the cicala, is ashamed to make such an endless self-glorification with that odd rattle which he carries in his stomach, and is almost quiet in the trees, only creaking a little now and then to assure mankind that he has not forgotten them; for every cicala, like each of us, believes himself the pivot of the world.

It was all so still; so warm and yet so cool; so full of sweet smells and of balmy quietude, here in Borghese, that a sort of slumber overtook me, and yet I was conscious in it all the while, as the mind in day-sleep often is, of the pleasant passage of the west wind through the opened lattice, and of the noisy chimes that were ringing in the city, and only echoed faintly and softly here through all the woodland thickness of green leaves.

Through half-closed eyes I saw the open window and the iron grating, and the bronze of the ilex boughs dark almost to blackness, and the high grass wherein the cattle were lying, and the broad blue skies that Raffaelle loved; and before me I saw the white god and the ivy-crowned head of my Ariadnê.

"Yes, yes, surely it is an Ariadnê," I muttered to myself, for there is great pleasure in one's own opinions. "Of course an Ariadnê—how can they be so blind? There is dawning womanhood in every line. But she knows nothing about Naxos."

And as I looked she seemed to change and hear; the bronze lips parted awhile, and seemed to smile and answer me: "Yes, I am Ariadnê. But how do you know? You, an old man sitting all day long at a street corner, far from all converse with the gods?"

And then a great change passed over all the bust, and a quiver and glow of life seemed to me to run through all the bronze and alabaster; the Egyptian stone of the column seemed to melt, and fold and unfold as a flower unfolds itself, and

became delicate and transparent raiment through which one saw the rosy flesh and the rounded lines of a girl's limbs and body; the metal in which the sculptor had imprisoned his thoughts seemed to dissolve, and grow warm and living, and become flesh, till breast and throat and cheek and brow blushed into sudden life.

The eyes grew liquid and lustrous like lake waters in star light; the ivy leaves grew green and fresh with dew; the clustered curls took brighter hues of gold and stirred as with the breeze; she grew alive and looked on all these white and silent gods.

"I am Ariadnê," she said sadly. "Yes. I knew Naxos. What woman escapes it that loves well? I am on earth once more, to my great woe. I prayed to Aïdoneus to remain, lost in the dark, and with Persephone. But she said: 'Nay, go upward into light, though into pain. Wept not Achilles here, and wished to be the meanest thing that lived and laboured upon earth rather than king amongst immortal shades? For better is it to see the sun, though toiling in the dust; and sweeter is it to be kissed on the mouth, though stabbed to the heart, than to abide in endless night and windless quiet:—go.' What did she mean? She said the gods would tell me. Tell me now. For of life I have forgotten as the dead forget. Only I forget not Naxos."

The gods were silent.

The lewd Cæsars hung their heads, and dared not lift their impure glance on hers.

Her own betrayer spoke first, and smiled with a smile that was at once pitiful yet cruel. What was Naxos to him, save as a dull spot that he had left gladly, leaving the dead behind him, to pass across the summer seas in his flower-garlanded vessel.

"Theseus and I gave you passion, dear: without it you could not see the sun nor feel the knife. Be thankful to us."

Then he touched the marble floor with his thyrsus, and on its barren whiteness a purple passion-flower bloomed, and an asp ate its starry heart.

The child Hercules, cast from his head downward at her feet the lion's skin.

"The strong alone know passion. Perhaps their pain is better than the peace of the feeble."

And his curved and rosy mouth grew sorrowful; he seemed

to be foreseeing his own shame when he should sit and spin, and think a woman's lightest laugh of scorn, more worth than smile of Zeus, or Olympus' praise.

The white cow lying sleeping beneath the ilex boughs rose from her bed in the grasses, and came and looked with lustrous weary eyes through the iron bars of the casement.

"Once men called me Io," she said, with wistful gaze. "But the gadfly in my flesh left me no peace till I sank content into the beast. It will be so with her when the purple passion-flower fades. The solitude of Naxos kills—if not the body then the soul."

But Apollo, hearing, where he stood in all his white glory in the halls within, came with the sun's rays about his perfect head, and answered for her:

"No. Had you had ears for my songs, Io, never could you have been changed into the brute, to browse and graze. The souls my Sibyls keep are strong."

Daphne—whom her lover had left alone in her agony—Daphne followed, with the boughs of the bay springing from her slender feet and from her beating bosom, and her floating hair becoming twisted leaves of bay.

"Your Sibyls are too strong for mortals, and there is no wisdom I see but Love!" she cried in her torment. "Gods and men begrudge us the laurel, but when the laurel grows from the breast of a woman—ah, heaven!—it hurts!"

Apollo smiled.

"Of Love you would have nothing. Your wisdom comes too late. Is the bay bitter? That is not my fault."

Artemis came and looked: she who ever slew the too audacious or too forgetful mortal, with her slender and unerring shaft.

"My sister Persephone has been more cruel than I," she said, with a smile. "Does she send you back to your isles of Dia again? And where was your father in that darksome world where he judges, that he lets you come hither to brave me once more? Oh, fair fool of too much love and too much wisdom! Why have lifted the sword? Why have found the clue? The gods ever punish the mortal too daring and too excelling."

"Eros is more cruel than you or Persephone, oh, my sovereign of the Silver Bow!" said Dionysos, and smiled. He knew, had he not betrayed, not even the sacred Huntress could have slain her.

Anacreon and Alcæus came from the central chambers and stood by: they had become immortals also.

They murmured low one to another:

"When gods and men speak of Love they wrong him: it is seldom he that reigns: it is only Philotês, who takes his likeness."

Amongst the deities from the upper chamber a mortal came; the light lewd woman who had bared her charms to live for ever here in marble, in counterfeit of the Venus Pandemos.

"There is no Naxos for women who love Love, and not one lover," she said, with a wanton laugh. "Gods and men alike are faithful only to the faithless. She who worships the beauty of her own body and its joys, is strong; she only; Aphrodite who made me taught me that."

Bacchus touched her in reproof, and the imperial harlot fled.

"Aphrodite's bond is hard," he said. "My sister Helen knew: serving her once, she served for ever; and day and night she drank Lethe and drank in vain."

The Roman woman lying in a farther chamber on her marble bier, with the poppy flowers of eternal sleep in her folded hands, glided as a shade glides from the asphodel meadows of the dead.

"If not the temple of Lubentina—then Death," she said. "There is no middle path between the two. Return to Orcus and Dis-Pater."

And she held out to Ariadnê the poppies red as war, which yet are symbols of the sole sure Peace.

But Psyche, playing with Eros in a niche where the motes of the sun were dancing to the sound of a satyr's syrinx, flew in on her rosy wings that are like the leaves of a pomegranate blossom, and caught the butterfly that always hovers above her own head, and would have given with it immortal life.

But Love coming after her, the dancing sunbeams in his curls stayed her hand.

"Nay—if this be Ariadnê, she knows full well if *I* abide not with her she needs death, not life."

"Then stay," said Ariadnê's traitor, with his sweet and cruel smile.

Love shook his head and sighed.

"You and men after you have forbidden me rest. The passion-flower blossoms but a single day and night, and I can lie no longer in one breast."

Anacreon said:

"Of old you had no wings, Eros. You were worthier of worship then. I know that, though I was only a drunken, lewd trifler, who merited not my immortality."

Alcæus said:

"The laurel grew even as a high wall betwixt me and Sappho, but it was no fence betwixt her and the grave in the sea."

Love laughed, for he is often cruel.

"I am stronger than all the gods, for, even being dead, you cannot forget me. Anacreon, all your songs were stupid as the dumb beside the eloquence of one murmur of mine. Alcæus, all your verses and all your valour could not save you from one death-blow that I dealt."

Anacreon and Alcæus were silent.

They knew that Love was stronger than men, fiercer than flame, and as the waves and the winds, faithless.

Ariadnê stood silent and irresolute; the purple passion-flower lifted to her bosom, and at her feet the strong and bitter laurel, and the poppies that give death. Her hand hovered now over one, now above the other, like a poised bird that doubts between the east and west.

Love chose for her, and lifted up the red flower of death.

"Be wise. When I shall leave you, eat of this and sleep."

I awoke; it had been but a dream; there were no gods near; only statues that gleamed in a faint whiteness in the dark, for the people of the place had come in to close the casements, and were shutting out the golden sun.

My Ariadnê was but bronze once more. Io was lying in the grass without. Psyche and Love and all were gone. Bacchus still, only, seemed to smile.

My friend the sculptor was coming into the gallery from his study of the frieze of the Labours of Hercules, and the rilievo of Auge and Telephus.

"Still before your Ariadnê? And it is not an Ariadnê," said Maryx. "And if it be, who cares for her? The true Ariadne is in the Capitol, or the Pio-Clementino, as you choose. Let us go home; it is too warm, and I am tired. I was at work at four this morning, whilst my nightingales still were singing. Come and have your noonday wine with me."

We went away out of the Emperors' room into the dusky dreamful glades, where all artists love to wander and think of

Raffaelle coming out through the morning dews, under the everlasting oaks.

"One is always glad to come here," said Maryx; "no habit dulls the charm of these old gardens; and no length of time dulls one's regret for Raffaelle's pavilion—destroyed in our own generation, yet we speak evil of the Huns and Visigoths, and revile the Greeks for casting down the statues of the Mausoleum! These woods must have suited Raffaelle so well; I dare say his dear violinist played to him here of a spring-day morning, where the violets grew thickest. It is a pity there was no better nymph for him than the Fornarina; those little hard, leering, cunning eyes of hers never could have cared for the violets, or for anything except the bracelets on her arms and the ducats in her purse. Are you dreaming of your Ariadnê still? It is not of much value, and it is no Ariadnê. I went by chance into the room of the Pauline Venus: my mouth will taste bitter all day. How venal, and gaudy, and vile she is with her gilded upholstery! It is the most hateful thing that ever wasted marble. It is not even sensual; for sensuality may have its force to burn, its imagery to madden, but Canova's Venus says nothing—unless, indeed, it says what fools men are, and what artificial wantons they have cared for ever since the Roman matrons bought false hair and paint in the Sacred Way. How one loves Canova, the man, and how one execrates Canova, the artist! Surely never was a great repute achieved by so false a talent, and so perfect a character! One would think he had been born and bred in Versailles instead of Treviso. He is called a naturalist! Look at his Graces! He is always Coysevox and Coustou at heart. Never purely classic, never frankly modern. Louis XIV. would have loved him better than Bernini."

We went out of the gates into the broad blaze of light; then away across the white piazza, where scarce a soul was stirring, and there was not a sound save of the rushing of the water from the lions' mouths at the base of the sun-pillar of Heliopolis that was rising like a sword of flame against the dazzling radiance of the air.

I loved and honoured Maryx; he was a great man, and good, and lived the life of the men of old, where his nightingales sang under his studio windows, amongst his myrtles and his marbles, on the side of the Sabine hill.

But I refused to go on across the water, and make my noonday meal with him; I was too full of dreams, and stupid still with sleep; I let him go home alone, and stopped at my own

place by the corner of the street that leads to the bridge of Sixtus, where the water gushes from the wall in the fountain that Fontana made for Pope Paul.

CHAPTER II.

A Faun lives in this Ponte Sisto water. Often in those days I heard him laughing, and under the splashing of the spouts caught the tinkle of his pipe.

In every one of the fountains of my Rome a naiad, or a satyr, a god, or a genius, has taken refuge, and in its depths dreams of the ruined temples and the levelled woods, and hides in its cool, green, moss-grown nest all day long, and when the night falls, wakes and calls aloud.

Water is the living joy of Rome.

When the sky is yellow as brass, and the air sickly with the fever mists, and the faces of men are all livid and seared, and all the beasts lie faint with the drought, it is the song of the water that keeps our life in us, sounding all through the daylight and the darkness, across the desert of brick and stone. Men here in Rome have "written their names in water," and it has kept them longer than bronze or marble. That has been well said by a western wanderer who wrote of the Faun of the Capitol.

When one is far away across the mountains, and can no more see the golden wings of the Archangel against the setting-sun, it is not of statues or palaces, not of Cæsars, or senators, not even of the statues that you think with wistful longing remembrance and desire: it is of the water that is everywhere in Rome, floating, falling, shining, splashing, with the clouds mirrored on its surface, and the swallows skimming its foam.

I wonder to hear them say that Rome is sad, with all that mirth and music of its water laughing through all its streets, till the steepest and stoniest ways are murmurous with it as any brook-fed forest depths. Here water is Protean; sovereign and slave, sorcerer and servant, slaking the mule's thirst, and shining in porphyry on the prince's terrace, filling the well in the cabbage garden, and leaping aloft against the Pope's palace· first called to fill the baths of the Agrippines, and serve the Naumachia of Augustus, it bubbles from a griffin's jaws or a wolf's teeth, or any other of the thousand quaint things set in

the masonry at the street corners, and washes the people's herbs and carrots, and is lapped by the tongues of dogs, and thrashed by the bare brown arms of washing women; first brought from the hills to flood the green Numidian marble of the thermæ, and lave the limbs of the patricians between the cool mosaic walls of the tepidarium, it contentedly becomes a household thing, twinkling like a star at the bottom of deep old wells in dusky courts, its rest broken a dozen times a day by the clash of the chain on the copper pail, above it the carnations of the kitchen balcony and the caged blackbird of the cook.

One grows to love the Roman fountains as sea-born men the sea. Go where you will there is the water; whether it foams by Trevi where the green moss grows in it like ocean weed about the feet of the ocean god, or whether it rushes, reddened by the evening light, from the mouth of an old lion that once saw Cleopatra; whether it leaps high in air, trying to reach the gold cross on St. Peter's, or pours its triple cascade over the Pauline granite; whether it spouts out of a great barrel in a wall in old Trastevere, or throws up into the air a gossamer as fine as Arachne's web in a green garden way where the lizards run, or in a crowded corner where the fruit-sellers sit against the wall;—in all its shapes one grows to love the water that fills Rome with an unchanging melody all through the year.

And best of them all, I love my own torrent that tumbles out of the masonry here close to the bridge of Sixtus, and has its two streams crossing one another like sabres gleaming bright against the dark, damp, moss-grown stones. There are so many fountains in our Rome, glorious, beautiful, and springing to high heaven, that nobody notices this one much, as, coming down through the Via Giulia, the throngs hurry on over the bridge, few, I fear praying for the soul of the man that built it —as the inscription asks of you to do, with a humility that is touching in a pontiff.

I would not go over the bridge with Maryx that morning, but sat down underneath my fountain that was so fresh and welcome in the warm June noon, where twenty years before I had raised my stall and dedicated it to Apollo Sandaliarius and the good Saints Crispin and Crispian in that jumbling of the pagan and the ecclesiastic, which is of all Roman things most Roman.

My faun was singing, sheltered safe under the mossy wall. The fauns are nowhere dead. They only hide in the water or the leaves; laughing and weeping like children;—then you say, "the fountains play," or you say "the leaves quiver."

Birds may not sing at noon. They are afraid to wake great Pan who sleeps all mid-day, as you know, and will have silence The fauns in the water do not heed Pan's pleasure or displeasure; he is driven out of all cities, and they know the grand god has small pleasure in a world that fells all his sacred woods. The birds are more faithful, being led by the woodpecker, who once was the friend of Mars, and the father of Faunus, and made all the kings of the earth meet together in his palace that Virgil has painted for us.

But all this is nonsense, you say;—very well; if it be nonsense to you, be sure to you Rome is dead, and you walk over its stones, blindfold and deaf.

"It is an Ariadnê," said I to the Faun in the water, for to keep one's opinion is a sweet pleasure and a cheap one; and as Winckelmann was certain that the Capitoline Ariadnê was a Leucothea, so was I certain that the Borghese Bacchus was an Ariadnê. Of course I know little of art, I only love it greatly, just as the men who most love women are those who know their moods and minds the least.

"It is an Ariadnê," I said to my dog Palès, left on guard on a little straw under my stool; a white, fox-faced, female thing, with a shrewish temper, and many original views of her own.

There was not a soul about, and not a body astir. The broad sunshine lay on the Tiber, making it look all of a hot brazen yellow; many martyrs used to be thrown into it just here, so Eusebius says, and it is not very far off that the boatman lived, in the Borgian time, who being asked why he had not given alarm when he saw a corpse thrown in, replied, that he saw so many every night, that he naturally thought nothing of it.

There was no one moving, and no shadows on the hot, white stones; over the bridge and down the Via Giulia all was still and empty, and all the shutters of the houses were closed. Only at the house at the corner where I lived, my friend Pippo, the cook, stepped out one moment into the balcony over the bridge, and, with one of his pet pigeons perched on his forehead, halloaed out that he had a stew ready, full of onions and peppercorns.

But a stew on a noonday in mid-summer was an abomination to the senses and the reason, and I took no notice of him, and he went in out of the sun, pigeon and all, and the place was quite quiet, except for the splashing and the foaming of the water in the wall, which sounded so cool and babbled so of forest leaves and brook-fed rushes, that no one could be hot within an ear-

shot of it. I scarcely envied Maryx in his marble court upon the hill, above Tasso's cypresses, and under Galba's oaks.

There was a cabbage-leaf nice and wet upon my head, and above that a square of untanned leather, stretched upon four sticks, and wet, too, with sprinkled water, and on the board before me, amongst the tools and the old leather, were a handful of vine-leaves, and the half of a water melon, and a flask of wine: who could be hot with all that?

There was nothing that needed haste; only the butcher's big old boots that he had brought over that morning from his shop oy St. Crispian's church; and I let them lie with the pair of little smart scarlet shoes that I had tacked up for handsome Dea at the seed shop yonder, who dearly loved a students' ball, and had a father as sharp of eye and hard of heart as Shylock; I took a little wine, and stretched myself, as Palès was doing at her ease; and the faun in the fountain was singing and piping his loudest of the days when men were wise and worshipped Sylvanus upon Aventine, and in the green gardens and the meadows and the forests invoked him as Sanctus Salutaris.

And with the music of their song and the bubbling of the water into the great stone basin in the wall, my unfinished sleep came over me again, and I dreamt that I was in the Gallery of the Cæsars again, and that again I heard the gods, and the poets, and the wanton, dispute round Ariadnê.

Ariadnê stretched her hand and touched mine.

I awoke. Palès was barking; the drowsy sunshine was white and wide about me, and between it and me a figure stood.

Was it Ariadnê's?

I stumbled to my feet.

"My dear, do not take the poppy," I muttered, stupidly. "Love was cruel; that he always is."

Then I got fuller awakened, and was only more bewildered; I could not stir, the sun blinded me, and the noise of Palès, and of the fountain, deafened me; I could only blink my eyes and stare as an old gray owl may do, startled out of sleep in the day-time, and seeing something fair and strange light on the branches of his hollow, ivy-mantled tree. The figure between me and the Via Giulia was so like the Ariadnê of Borghese that I could only gaze at it idiotically, and wish that I were indoors with Pippo and his peppercorns. For there are old weird legends here and there in Rome of statues that have come to life and given little peace to those that roused them.

The figure between me and the golden light and the dark

walls had poppies in her hand and a purple passion-flower; the stuffs she wore looked to me like the variegated alabaster; she had the small head, the clustered hair, the youthful eyes, the look as of one whom Aïdoneus had sent up to seek for light and life and whom Love claimed.

"Do not take the poppies; they mean death!" I stammered, blinking like an owl; and then I saw that it was not the bronze of the Borghese made alive, but a mere naturally living creature, a girl, travel-stained and tired, and holding gathered flowers that were drooping in the heat.

She came a little nearer, and leaned her two hands upon my board, and Palès ceased to yell, and smelt at her almost tenderly.

"The poppies are no harm," she said, with a little wonder. "Will you tell me where the Ghetto is? I want the Portico of Octavia."

When I heard her voice speaking, then I knew that it was not my Ariadnê with her robes of gold and rose, and her crown of imperishable ivy, but only a mere human thing standing between me and the sunshine.

Her skirts were white indeed, but of the roughest linen spun on village distaffs, and what I had taken for the hues of the alabaster was an old Roman scarf of many colours such as our Trasteverine women wear. Her small and slender feet were disfigured in coarse shoes covered over with gray powder from the highways and the streets. The poppies were common field flowers such as grow everywhere by millions, when the corn is high, and the passion-flower, no doubt, she had pulled down from any one of the garden walls or the Campagna hedges. But in her face—though the skin was golden with sun-tan, and the eyes were heavy with fatigue, and the clustering hair was tumbled and dull from heat and dust—in the face I saw my Ariadnê.

I had not been wholly dreaming this time.

"I have come from the sea," she said, with her hands leaning on the plank of my board. "I have lost my way. I do not know where to go. You look good; would you tell me where the Portico of Octavia is? That is what I want."

She was a beautiful girl, a child almost. I stumbled to my feet on a sort of instinct of deference to her sex and youth. Though she was very poor, as one could see, there was a strange grace about her as she stood with all the hot sun beating down on her bronze-hued head, that should have had the crown of ivy on it. She looked tired, but not timid in any way; and there was a look of eager and joyous expectation on her face. Just so

might Claudia Quinta have looked when with her own unaided hands she drew the stranded vessel of the Magna Mater off the banks of Tiber, in triumph and vindication of her innocence.

"The Portico of Octavia?" I echoed, stupidly. "Do you know what it is, now, my dear?"

"Yes, I have read of it in old Latin books."

(In Latin books—good heavens!)

"And you want to go to the Ghetto?"

"Yes, that is the name."

"Do you know what that is?"

"No."

"Why do you go then?"

"There lives an old man there that was my mother's father; I was to go to him."

An old man in the Ghetto, and she my Ariadnê!—the two went ill together. Not that I have any prejudices. Though a Roman born, I have lived in too many lands, and, in my own way, with too many dead men's minds in books, to have any hostility against class or country. Only for this girl whom all the gods had counselled, and who had Love's poppy-flowers in her hands, to go to that foul quarter that had once the gilded vileness of the Suburra, and has now the dingy vileness of the Ghetto! She saw the astonishment and reluctance in me, and the foolish impulse of displeasure that I felt must have shown itself on my features, for she looked disappointed.

"I can ask some one else," she said, a little sadly. "You have your stall to leave, and perhaps it is far away. I beg your pardon."

But I did not like to let her go. It seemed churlish, and I might never see her again. Rome is large, and the Ghetto foul air for body and spirit.

"No, no," I cried to her, for she was already turning away. "It is not that. It is not far off, and if it were, the stall is safe with the dog, but in the heat, and to that pigsty—not but what I will go with you, my dear—oh yes, only wait a little till the noon sun passes."

"I would rather not wait," she said; and paused, but looked at me doubtingly, as though my hesitation had suggested to her some misgiving of herself or me, and that I did not like.

I wondered what the Faun on the fountain thought of it; he and I often gossiped together; but I had no time to take counsel of him, for she was moving away towards the bridge and the nightingale-haunted slope of Janus' hill.

"That is the wrong road," I cried to her. "You have no need to cross the river. My dear, if I seemed to hesitate I must have seemed a brute. I had been asleep in this hot air, and got as empty-pated as a scooped-out melon that the boys have emptied in the sun. Just wait here till this great noon glare passes—it is shady here, and not a soul will come—then I will go with you, for the streets are puzzling when one does not know them; not that there ever was a time that they were strange to me, the gods be praised!"

She look at me quickly with confidence.

"You love Rome?"

"Who loves not his mother? And *our* mother is the mother of the world."

She looked glad, and as if pleased with me, and took the stool I pushed to her, where the shadow of the leather could shelter her from the sun.

Palès licked her hand; Palès, who hated strangers, especially those whose hands were empty.

She gave a short sigh as of fatigue, once seated; but her eyes went to the water springing from the wall, and to the domes and temples that she could see afar off. As I happened to have a little rush basket full of the first figs under my vine leaves, (I had meant them for handsome Dea, but Dea would have the scarlet shoes,) I gave them to this girl, and she thanked me with a smile, and slaked her thirst with one of them, which comforted me, for it seemed to make her more thoroughly human. I was still a little afraid of her, as one is of the creatures of one's dreams.

"You spoke of the sea; you come from the Maremma?" I asked her; for no one who sits all his life long at a street corner can bear to sit in silence as she was willing to do.

"Yes; from the coast."

"But you seem to remember Rome?"

"My father was a Roman."

She spoke with a flash of pride.

"Is he dead, my dear?"

"He died a year ago," she answered; and her beautiful curved mouth grew pale and trembled. "He told me, when the money would not last any more, I must try and find the old man by the Portico of Octavia; and the money was done—so I came."

"What was your father?"

"A sculptor, and he carved wood too."

And this old man?"

"I do not know. I believe he was cruel to my mother. But I am not sure. I never heard very much. Only, when he was dying he gave me some papers, and told me to come to Rome. And I would have come to Rome if he had not told me, because there was no place on earth he loved so well, and only to see it and die, he said, that was enough——"

"He lived very near to die without seeing it."

"He was very poor always and in ill-health," she said, under her breath. The words rebuked my thoughtless and cynical remark.

"And this old man who is in Ghetto, is he all you have to look to."

"Yes. I think he will be glad to see me, do not you?"

"Surely, if he have eyes," I said, and felt a little choking in my throat, there was something so solitary and astray in her, yet nothing afraid.

"And what is your name, my dear?"

"They called me Giojà."

"Giojà. And why that?"

"I suppose because my mother thought me a joy to her when I came. I do not know. It was her fancy——"

"A pretty one, but still heathenish as a name, as a baptismal name, you know; it is not in the Saints' Calendar."

"No. I have no saint. I do not know much about the saints. I have read St. Jerome's writings, and the City of God. and Chrysostom; but I do not care for them; they were hard men and cruel, and they derided the beautiful gods, and broke their statues. It was Julian that was right, not they; only he killed so many beautiful birds. I would not have done that."

I was of her way of thinking myself; but in Rome, with the monks and the priests everywhere at that time, as many as ants that swarm in midsummer dust across a roadway, one had to be guarded how one said such things, or one got no ecclesiastical sandals or sacerdotal shoon to stitch, and fell into bad odour.

"No, there is no saint for me," she said, a little sadly again, and looked up at the blue sky, as though conscious that other girls had celestial guardians yonder in the golden shrines, and upward in the azure heavens, but she was all alone.

"It does not matter," I said heathenishly, like the pagan that I was, as Father Trillo, who was a heavy man, and trod heavily, and wore out many a pair of shoes, would often tell me with a twinkle in his merry eyes.

"It is no matter. Let us hope the gods of joy are with you

that the Christians killed. Maybe they will serve as good a purpose as the saints. They are not really dead. You may see them everywhere here in Rome, if you have faith. Only wait till the night falls."

She sat silently, not eating her figs, but watching the water gush out from the wall. She had dipped her poppies in it to refresh them, the passiflora was already dead. There was a perplexed expectant look in her dreamy eyes, as though indeed Persephone had really sent her up to earth.

"Have you come all the way from the sea to-day? and from what part of the coast?" I asked her, to keep her there in the shade a little.

"From below Orbetello," she answered. "I have walked a part of the way; the other part boats brought me that were coasting. The fisher people are always kind; and many know me."

"Were you not sorry to leave the sea?"

"I should have been, only I came to Rome. Where we lived it was lovely; great rocks and those rocks all thyme-covered, and the sheep and the goats grazing; further in the marshes it is terrible, you know; all reeds, and rushes, and swamps, and salt-water pools, and birds that cry strangely, and the black buffalo. But even there, there are all the dead cities, and the Etruscan kings' tombs. I did not lose sight of the sea till the day before yesterday, when they told me I must turn inland, and indeed I knew it by the maps, but I could not find the birds and the thickets that Virgil writes of, nor the woods along the river, it is all sand now. There was a barge coming up the river with pines that had been felled, and I paid the men in it a little, and they let me come up the Tiber with them, for I was tired. We were all the two nights and yesterday on the water. I was not dull. I was looking always for Rome. But the river is dreary; it is not at all like what Virgil says."

"Virgil wrote two thousand years ago. Did that never occur to you?"

"I thought it would be all the same," she said, with a little sigh. "Why should it change? They have not bettered it. The forests and the roses must have been lovelier than the sand. Last night it rained, and there was thunder. I got very wet, and I grew a little afraid. The pines looked so helpless, great strong things that had used to stand so straight by the side of the waves, thrown down there and bound, and going to be built into walls for scaffolding, and burn up in ovens and furnaces, and

never going to see the sea and the seagulls and the coral fishing any more! But nothing really hurt me you see, and when the rain passed off it was sunrise, and though we were leagues away I saw a gold cross shining where the clouds had broken, and one of the bargemen said to me, 'There—that is St. Peter's;' and I thought my heart would have broken with happiness, and when at last we landed at the wharf where the lions' heads are, I sprang on to the landing-place, and I knelt down and kissed the earth, and thanked God because at last I saw Rome."

I listened, and felt my eyes wet, and my heart warmed to her, because Rome is to me—as to all who love her truly—as mother and as brethren, and as the world and the temple of the world.

"I thank Thee who hast led me out of darkness into light," I murmured, as the Hebrew singer does. "That is what Maryx said when first his foot touched Rome. It is a pity Maryx should be gone across the bridge to his nightingales."

"Who is Maryx?"

"A great man."

"And you?"

"A small one—as you see."

"And why have you Apollo there?"

She was looking at a little statue, a foot high above my stall, that Maryx had made for me many years before, when he was a youth studying at the Villa Medici.

"That is Apollo Sandaliarius. The shoemakers had their share of the sun-god in Rome; to be sure it was not till Rome became corrupt, which takes from the glory of it; but in his statues he is always sandalled, you know. And underneath there are Crispin and Crispianus, who have their church hard by; the brother-saints who made shoes for the poor for nothing, and the angels brought them the leather: that picture of them is on stained glass; look at their palm leaves and their awls; they are always represented like that."

"You are a Roman?"

"Oh yes. You may have heard of that cobbler whom Pliny tells us of who had his stall in the midst of the Forum, and who had a crow that talked to the Romans from the rostrum, and was beloved by them, and which crow he slew in a fit of rage because it tore up a new bit of leather, as if the poor bird could help destroying something, having consorted with lawgivers and statesmen! That man they slew, and the crow they buried with divine honours in the Appian Way. I am the ghost of that most unlucky man. I have always told the people so, and they

will believe anything if only you tell it them often enough and loudly enough. Have they not believed in the virtues of kings, and are they not just beginning to believe in the virtues of republics? The sun is off one side of Via Giulia; now do you wish to be going? Will you not break a piece of bread with your figs first?"

She would not, and we took the way along the river towards the Ghetto.

As we walked she told me a little more about herself, and it was easy to surmise the rest. Her father, when little more than a student, had been ordered out of the city in exile for some real or imagined insult to the church, and ruined in his art and fortunes, had gone, a broken-hearted man at five-and-twenty, to a dull village on the Ligurian Sea, taking with him the daughter of a Syrian Jew, Ben Sulim, whom he had wedded there, she changing her faith for his. What manner of man he might have been was not very clear, because she loved him, and where women love they lie so innocently and unwittingly of the object which they praise; but I gathered that he had had, probably, talent, and a classic fancy, rather than genius, and had been weak and quickly beaten, finding it simpler to lie in the sun and sorrow for his fate, than to arise and fight against it: there are many such.

She said he had used to carve busts and friezes and panels in the hard arbutus wood, and sometimes in the marble that lies strewn about that coast, and would model also in terra-cotta and clay, and send his things by hucksters to the towns for sale, and so get a little money for the simple life they led.

Life costs but little on these sunny, silent shores; four walls of loose stones, a roof of furze and brambles, a fare of fish and fruit and millet-bread, a fire of driftwood easily gathered—and all is told. For a feast pluck the violet cactus; for a holiday push the old red boat to sea, and set the brown sail square against the sun—nothing can be cheaper, perhaps few things can be better.

To feel the western breezes blow over that sapphire sea, laden with the fragrance of a score of blossoming isles. To lie under the hollow rocks, where centuries before the fisher folk put up that painted tablet to the dear Madonna, for all poor shipwrecked souls. To climb the high hills through the tangle of myrtle and tamarisk, and the tufted rosemary, with the kids bleating above upon some unseen height. To watch the soft

night close in, and the warning lights shine out over shoals and sunken rocks, and the moon hang low and golden in the blue dusk at the end there under the arch of the boughs. To spend long hours in the cool, fresh, break of day, drifting with the tide, and leaping with bare free limbs into the waves, and lying outstretched upon them, glancing down to the depths below, where silvery fish are gliding and coral branches are growing, and pink shells are floating like roseleaves, five fathoms low and more. Oh! a good life, and none better, abroad in the winds and weather, as Nature meant that every living thing should be, only, alas, the devil put it into the mind of man to build cities! A good life for the soul and the body: and from it this sea-born Joy came to seek the Ghetto!

We went through the crooked streets whilst the shadow of the houses was still scarce wider than a knife's edge, through the dusty and sorrowful ways once threaded by the silken litters with their closed curtains and fringes of gold, and their amorous secrets and their running slaves, of the beautiful women who once gave fashion and fame to the quarter of the Velabrum. She looked as if such a litter should be bearing her to feast the sight of Cæsar, and lean on cushions in that casement "whence the women could see the play of the fountains as they supped."

But that window is now only a line of shattered brick upon the Palatine, and this my Ariadnê was going to the Ghetto!

What a face she had! I thought if one could only have plaited an ivy wreath, and set it on her curls, instead of the hood she had pulled over them, the Borghese bronze would have been her very likeness. She seemed to me Ariadnê, caressed by the sea, and made sweet and strong by it, and with fair young limbs, and young breasts like seashells—but no lover, mortal or immortal, had touched her yet.

She went through the streets with happy dreaming eyes, as of one who goes to a beloved friend long unseen.

"You knew Rome before?" I asked her.

"I never saw it with my eyes, nor walked in it," she answered me. "But I know it well. My father had Pliny and Pausanias and Strabo and all the old books, and pictures, drawings, and models, he had made; and would bring them out and talk of them half the day and night. When I was quite little I set off to walk to Rome. I was three years old, I think; and they found me asleep among the myrtles on the hills three miles from home. My father would sit on the shore and look

over the hills eastwara so often, with such a hunger in his eyes. 'The moon is looking on her now,' he would say; 'if only I could see the bronze Aurelius black against the sky before I die!' But he never did. It must be so with any Roman. It would be so with you."

"It was so with me. Only I—returned."

"Ah, he had not the strength! But he loved Rome always. Better than my mother, or than me."

Then her month shut close, and she looked vexed to have seemed to pass any reproach on him.

We went under the Arch of Janus and past the bright spring of the Argentine water.

"That is the spring of the Dioscuri, I think?" she said, and looked at me eagerly.

Who could have the heart to tell her it was an oft-disputed point?

"Yes; they say so," I said to her. "You see, my dear, we must be different men in Rome to any other men; the very cattle-drivers can water their bullocks from where the divine Tyndarids let their chargers drink."

"You believe in the Dioscuri?" she said, with serious eyes on mine, and I saw that unless I should say I did, I should never win a step farther in her confidence.

"Of course," I answered; "who would lose them, the brethren of Light by the lake side?"

And indeed I do believe all things and all traditions. History is like that old stag that Charles of France found out hunting in the woods once, with the bronze collar round its neck on which was written, "Cæsar mihi hoc donavit." How one's fancy loves to linger about that old stag, and what a crowd of mighty shades come thronging at the very thought of him! How wonderful it is to think of—that quiet grey beast leading his lovely life under the shadows of the woods, with his hinds and their fawns about him, whilst Cæsar after Cæsar fell and generation on generation passed away and perished! But the sciolist taps you on the arm. "Deer average fifty years of life; it was some mere court trick of course—how easy to have such a collar made!" Well, what have we gained? The stag was better than the sciolist.

She smiled and lingered there, with the look always on her face as of one who sees his native land at length after long absence.

For the saints she cared little more than they did for her. I saw she seldom looked at the frescoed virgins, and the china

martyrs behind their iron gratings at the turnings of the streets but wherever an old fluted column was built into the dingy brick, or where a broad semi-circle sprang across a passage-way with green weeds in its crumbled carvings, there her gaze rested, and a certain shadow of disappointment and of wonder began to replace the eager expectation on her face.

"I have seen Rome in my dreams every night," she said at last. "Only I thought that it was all of marble; marble, and gold, and ivory, and the laurels and the palms growing everywhere, and the courts in the temples open to the sky; and it is all dust—all dust and dirt."

"It is not dust in Rome, nor dirt," said I. "It is dead men's ashes. You forget, my dear, Virgil's birds are all silent, and the roses of Ostia are all faded. Nothing blooms two thousand years, except now and then a woman's face in the marble."

She sighed a little, heavily.

"What do you expect the Ghetto to be like?" I asked her, for it seemed terrible to me that she should have been allowed to grow up in this sort of illusion.

"Oh, I know what that is," she answered quickly. "At least my father has told me so often, when I asked him, because it was my mother's birth-place, and must be beautiful I thought, and I was so little when she died. He always showed me the drawings of the Portico of Octavia, and of that I could read much, and the books all said that there were few places lovelier in Rome, and that Praxiteles' Cupid and other statues were there, and the Theatre of Marcellus and Juno's temple were close by, and so I have always seen it in my fancy, white as snow, and with many fountains, and above head, in the open domes, the swallows flying, and now and then an eagle going across like a great cloud. Tell me—am I not right? Is it like that? Tell me?"

I turned my head away and felt sick at heart for her—fed on these fair, cruel visions, and going to the filth of Pescheria and Fiumara!

"My dear! you will always forget the roses by Ostia," I said to her. "Rome is changed. You remember the sieges she has borne, and she has had masters more cruel to her arts and her antiquity than any enemies. That great black pile you saw yonder (old to us—it is the Farnese), was built out of the ruins of the Flavian amphitheatre. The Rome you think of is no longer ours. Octavia would know no place where her foot fell could she come back and walk by daylight through the city: by

moonlight one may cheat oneself. But it is the urbs still, the caput mundi—the capital of the world. Yes, still there is no city upon earth like Rome. Why will you hasten? Stay here by the spring of your Dioscuri and eat your figs. The sun is warm."

"No, let me see it—all—quickly," she said, with a restless sigh; a great troubled fear had come upon her.

If I had been a prince or cardinal now—or even Maryx or my friend Hilarion—but I was only Crispin the cobbler, with no more than was needed for myself and Palès, and only one room in a house hanging over Tiber, and shared with half a hundred other tenants. I could do nothing—nothing—except plod after her in the heat through the empty ways of the quarter of my friends the tanners.

Was I asleep again, and only dreaming after all? I began to think so.

She kept walking onward through the thick white dust, with a free swift motion, tired though she was, that might have trodden grass at daydawn and scarce brushed the dew.

In silence we approached the Doric pillars of the lower arcades of the Theatre of Marcellus, and where once the court of Augustus, shuddering, saw the evil omen of the broken curule chair, there were only now the mules munching their fodder or straining under the whip and knife, and their mountain drivers laughing and swearing, quarrelling and shrieking, and the peasant women suckling their rough, brown, clamorous babes, and the Jew pedlars slinking from stall to stall, hungry and lynx-eyed for safe bargain and barter. The great uncouth Orsini walls leant over the pillars and jammed them down into the ground; lattices varicoloured with multitudinous fluttering rags gaped between the higher Ionian columns; black yawning entrances showed piles of lumber and of rude merchandise, old copper, tattered clothes, pots and pans, cabbages and cauldrons, rusty iron and smoking stews:—the *tu Marcellus eris* seemed to sigh through the riot of screams and oaths and mirth and fury, and shouted songs and vendors' curses.

She paused in the midst of the dirt, the squalor, the pushing people; and a vague terror came into her eyes that looked up into mine with a vague distrust.

"Do you lead me right? Are you sure?"

I would have given my right hand to have been able to answer her that I led her wrong.

But what could I do? I could not build up for her out of

my old leather the marble and golden city of her scholars' fancies.

I answered her almost roughly: men are often rough when they are themselves in pain.

"Yes, this is right enough. Rome has seen two thousand years of sack and siege, and fire and sword, and robbery and ruin, since the days you dream of, child. I tell you Augustus would not know one stone of all the many that he laid. His own mighty tumulus is only a propped-up ruin; and the people chuckle there on summer-nights over little comedies; you may laugh at Harlequin where Livia sat, dishevelled and distraught. Hadrian could slay Apollodorus for daring to disagree with him about the height of a temple, but he could not ensure his own grave from desecration and destruction; it is a fortress yonder for the fisherman of Galilee; he has a little better fate than Augustus, but not much. Pass through the market—take care, those crawfish bite. You see the Corinthian columns all cracked and scorched? The flames did that in Titus' time. Yes, those built into that ugly church, I mean, and jammed up amongst those hovels. Well, that is all that you or I or any one will ever see of the Portico of Octavia; the one good woman of imperial Rome."

I said it roughly and brutally; I knew that as I spoke, yet I said it. Men use rude words and harsh, sometimes, by reason of the very gentleness and pity that are in their souls.

We were in the middle of the Pescheria.

It was Friday, and there was a large supply of fish still unexhausted; rosy mullets, white soles, huge cuttlefish, big spigole, sweet ombrini, black lobsters—all the fish of the Tyrrhene seas were swarming everywhere and filling all the place with salt strong pungent odours. Fish by the thousands and tens of thousands, living and dying, were crowded on the stone slabs and in the stone tanks, and on the iron hooks which jutted out between corbels and architraves and pillars and headstones, massive with the might of Cæsarian Rome, and which in their day had seen Titus roll by in his chariot behind his milk-white horses, with the trumpets of the Jubilee and the veil of the Temple borne before him by his Syrian captives.

She stood in the midst of the narrow way with the acrid smells and the writhing fish and the screaming people round her, and in the air the high arch restored by Septimius Severus, now daubed with bruised and peeling frescoes of the Christian Church; at her side was a filthy hole where a woman crimped

a living quivering eel; above her head was a dusky unglazed window where an old Jew was turning over rusty locks and bars.

She stood and looked: she who came to see the Venus of Pheidias and Praxiteles' Love.

Then a deathlike paleness overspread her face, an unspeakable horror took the light out of her eyes; she dropped her head and shivered as with cold in the hot Roman sunshine.

I waited silently. What could I say?

With a visible and physical ill one can deal; one can thrust a knife into a man at need, one can give a woman money for bread or masses, one can run for medicine or a priest. But for a creature with a face like Ariadnê's, who had believed in the old gods and found them fables, who had sought for the old altars and found them ruins, who had dreamed of Imperial Rome and found the Ghetto—for such a sorrow as this, what could one do?

CHAPTER III.

I WAITED for some passionate outbreak from her after the manner of women, but none came; one might have said she had been frozen there, so silently she stood.

After a little while she turned her face to me.

So one would fancy any creature would look that finds itself adrift upon a wide and unknown sea, and has been dreaming of land and home, and wakes and finds only the salt water and the unfamiliar stars.

I tried to comfort her, blunderingly; a man so often does his worst when he means the best.

"Take courage, my dear," I said, "and do not look like that. They are all that are left, it is true, those columns in the wall and that arch, and a few lintels and capitals and such like, here and there, like this egg-and-cup cornice just above our heads where that woman crimps her fish—and where the Venus and the Love are gone, who knows? The losses of the world are many—they may be under our very feet beneath the soil, that is quite possible. And the place is filthy and the people are cruel, and you may well be startled. But do not think that it is all as bad as this. Oh no, Rome is still beautiful; so you will say when you know it well; and the past is all about you in it —only you must have patience. It is like an intaglio that has been lying in the sand for a score of centuries. You must rub

the dust away—then the fine and noble lines of the classic face show clearly still. You thought to see Augustan Rome? I know! And your heart aches because of the squalor and the decay and the endless loss everywhere that never will be made up to the world, let the ages come and go as they may, and cities rise and fall. But you must have patience. Rome will not give her secrets up at the first glance. Only wait a little while and see the moon shine on it all a night or two, and you will learn to love her better in her colossal ruin than even you have loved the marble and ivory city of your dreams. For there is nothing mean or narrow here: the vaults, the domes, the stairs, the courts, the waters, the hills, the plains, the sculpture, the very light itself, they are all wide and vast and noble, and man himself dilates in them, gains stature and soul as it were, one scarce knows how, and someway looks nearer God in Rome than ever he looks elsewhere. But I talk foolishly—and this is Ghetto."

I had hardly known very well what I did say; I wanted to solace her, and knew ill how to do it. She stood with wide-opened despairing eyes, looking down the narrow lines of stinking Pescheria to the charred and crumbled columns builded into the church wall of Our Lady of the Fishes. She had not heard a single word that I had said.

"This is Rome!" she murmured after a moment, and was still again; her voice had changed strangely, and all the hope was dead in it; the hope that a little while before had rung as sweet and clear as rings the linnet's song at daybreak in the priory garden upon Aventine.

"This is the Hebrew quarter of Rome—yes," I answered her. It seemed to me as if I said "Yes—this is hell," and led her there. She went forward without any other word, and entered the Place of Weeping.

"Is there one Ben Sulim here—an old man?" she asked of a youth beating a worn Persian carpet, red and white, upon the stones. The lad nodded, tossing his dusky curls out of his jewel-bright eyes to stare at her.

"You want him?" he said; "go to the left there—on the fifth floor just underneath the roof; there, where that bit of gold brocade is hanging out to scare the moths away with the sun. Do you bring any good things to sell? or come to buy?"

"Is he poor?" she asked, dreamily, watching the olive-skinned babies that were rolling in the dirt. The lad grinned from end to end of his mouth, like a tulip flower.

"We are all poor here," he answered her, and fell again to the thrashing of his carpet, while the babies rolled in the dust with curious delight in its filth and their own nakedness. She moved on towards the place that he had pointed out, where the brocade that might one day have served Vittoria Colonna was catching on its tarnished gold such narrow glints of sunshine as could come between the close-packed roofs. She seemed to have forgotten me.

I caught her skirts and tried to hold her back. "Stay—my dear, stay!" I said to her, not knowing very well what words I used. "Let me go first and ask: this is no place for you. Stay—see—I am poor too, and old, and of little account, but my home is better than this reeking desolation, than this stew of thieves and usurers and necromancers, and foul women who blend vile philtres to the hurt of maidens' souls. Come, you who belong to all the gods of Joy, you must not be buried there;—you, my Ariadnê, you will grow sick and blind with sorrow, and die like a caged nightingale of never seeing any glimpse of heaven, and how will Love, who loves you, ever find you there? Come back——"

She looked at me wonderingly, thinking me mad no doubt, for what could she know of my dream before the Borghese bronze? But the pain in her was too deep for any lesser emotion to prevail much with her. She drew herself from my grasp, and moved onward towards the deep dark doorway like a pit's mouth that was underneath the gold brocade.

Two hags were sitting at the doorstep, fat and yellow, picking over rags, rubies of glass and chains of gilt beads shaking in their ears and on their breasts. They leered upon her as she approached.

She turned and stretched her hand to me.

"You have been good and I am thankful," she said faintly. "But let me go alone. The old man is poor, that is a reason the more; perhaps he wants me. Let me go. If I have need of anything I will come to you by yon fountain—let me go."

Then the mouth of the pit seemed to swallow her; the darkness seemed to engulf her, and the red glow of the dying poppies in her hand was lost to me.

The two hags, who had been all eyes and ears, chuckled and nodded at me.

"A fair morsel that! Does she go to Ben Sulim? She has a look of Zourah. Oh, yes, she has a look of Zourah; it is only the other day—some sixteen years or so—the handsomest maid

in all the Ghetto, and with a voice!—like a rain of diamonds the notes were when she sang. She used to sing on high there, where the gold stuff hangs, and all the courts were still as death to listen. Ben Sulim had just sold her to a man of Milan for the public stage, when one morn the bird was missing, and he searched all Rome in vain; some said she had gone with a student, a Trasteverino, who worked in marble, who had been banished for some irreverence to his own church, the church of the Christians. But no one ever rightly knew. Is this her daughter—a comely maiden. But she will get no welcome there. Well, there are princes and cardinals!——"

And with a leer again and laughter in their thick quaking voices they turned to their old rags. I sought to get from them what manner of man this Syrian Jew was who dwelt there, but they were cautious or else tongue-tied by the comradeship of a common faith with him. They would tell me nothing more, except that he was poor, and had come to Rome many long years before from Smyrna.

I left them with a shudder, and took my homeward way.

There were the butcher's boots waiting, and Padre Trillo's shoes to go to him, and that fragment from the Aldine press to pore over, and many things to interest me, such as, the gods be praised! I always found in life; such as any one may find indeed if they will seek for them.

If our beloved Leopardi, instead of bemoaning his fate in his despair and sickening of his narrow home, had tried to see how many fair strange things there lay at his house door, had tried to care for the troubles of the men that hung the nets on the trees, and the innocent woes of the girl that carried the grass to the cow, and the obscure martyrdom of maternity and widowhood that the old woman had gone through who sat spinning on the top of the stairs, he would have found that his little borgo that he hated so for its dulness had all the comedies and tragedies of life lying under the sound of its tolling bells. He would not have been less sorrowful, for the greater the soul the sadder it is for the unutterable waste, the unending pain of life. But he would never have been dull: he would never have despised, and despising missed, the stories and the poems that were round him in the millet fields and the olive orchards. There is only one lamp which we can carry in our hand, and which will burn through the darkest night, and make the light of a home for us in a desert place: it is sympathy with everything that breathes.

My heart was heavy as I left the Place of Weeping and

passed into the crooked spot where the schools gather and the Hebrew children learn the lex talionis as a virtue; just there, there towers, as all the world knows, a dusky, vast, irregular mass of stone and rubble that frowns on the streets beneath like a leaden storm-hued cloud.

So black it looked and hateful, frowning against the blue sky of the sweet afternoon, that for a moment I forgot what it was; one moment only, then I knew the shapeless mound was once the Theatre of Balbus; the mass built on to it and out of it was the palace of the Cenci.

On high are the grated casements whence the eyes of Beatrice once looked to see if there were any light on earth or hope in heaven, since she had been born in hell, and in hell must perish.

Behind, fathoms deep, as in sea depths, lie the shameful and secret caverns where imperial crimes were done, and death-cries stifled, and dead bodies dragged out by the hook to the river, and nameless infamies wrought on hapless innocence that never vengeance reached nor any judgment followed.

Those two hang together over the Ghetto, the sin of the Empire, the horror of the Cenci: in their shadow I left her.

CHAPTER IV.

As I drew near my stall I heard the people talking, coming out a little from their doors as the noon heat passed.

"Crispin has been gone all the morning," said Tistic, the barber, who will shave a human head so well that no one shall know it from a pumpkin.

"And my boots not touched," growled Massimo, the butcher. "That's what comes of being so very clever—a fool sticks to his last."

"He is always poring over a book."

"Or mooning with the monks."

"Or fooling with the painters."

"Or standing moonstruck, staring at old stones."

"But when he does work, it is the best work in Rome, and lasts! Why, a mended shoe of Crispin's has triple the wear of a brand-new one from any other stall. And he is honest," so said Lillo, the melon-seller, who is a good soul, and partial to me.

"Yes, he is honest," most of them sighed, as though sadly owning a defect.

"Yes," said old Meluccio, who sells old books a few yards off. "The other day he bought a book of me, an old rotten thing; but something that delighted him. I never know the titles; I buy them by the weight. And back he comes at nightfall to bring me a paper note he had found between the pages, a note good for twenty florins! What do you say to that?"

"I always thought his pate was cracked, for my part," said Bimbo, the tinker, whose own head I had cracked some years before with a handy bit of wood, for ill treating a poor pony.

"He is as good as gold. I often think he is the precious St. Crispin himself come back on earth. Look what he is when any one of us has the fever, or cannot pay up to time with rent!" said poor hard-working Serafina, the washerwoman, giving kisses to her big brown boy, whose two-year-old feet were dancing on the top of a wine-barrel.

I, of whom my good neighbours talked so kindly, am a Roman born. I was son of old Beredino Quintilio, the king of the beggars, who reigned on the Spanish Steps, in good old times, when the whole City agreed with you, that you would be a fool to bend your back and stick a spade in the ground, when you could get plenty by merely stretching your hand out, where you lay at your ease, in the sunshine.

Of course, the world is of the same opinion still, in point of fact; but it only allows the practice of this philosophy to beggars in good broadcloth and purple phylacteries. The beggar in rags goes to prison now, in Rome as elsewhere.

We lived very snugly in Trastevere, that is, we always had good wine, and fries of all fashions, and in carnival time never missed money to prank forth with the gayest of them: for Beredino had a noble head, fit for Abraham or Agamemnon, and a really withered leg, that, rightly managed, was a fortune in itself.

We came of the Gens Quintilii, according to our traditions; and, indeed, why not?—and, of course, my father being so noble, and of such ancient lineage, never could work.

"Beg too, little wretch," said he to me, when I was big enough to trot out across the river to the Spanish Square, and I begged accordingly, till I was seven. I never made very much, I was ugly; and I could never bring myself to whine.

When I got to be seven years old, I asked a little girl, not much older, for a coin. She was a very pretty little foreign

thing, just coming down the steps of the Trinità de Monti. She looked like a little angel, for she had a cloud of light hair, and some roses in her hands. She gave me the roses.

"You can sell them," she said to me; "but why do you beg? —only thieves and cowards do that."

And then she ran away to her people.

That night Beredino beat me with a stout ash stick, because I brought home nothing. My body was sore for three days; but I did not care. I kept the roses. When the stripes were healed, I went to an old fellow I knew, who cobbled boots and shoes in Trastevere.

"Will you teach me to do that?" I asked him. "I am tired of the Spanish Steps, and I will not beg any more."

The old fellow shoved his spectacles on to the crown of his head in amazement.

"Little Rufo, you are mad! What are you thinking of? I do not make so much in a week as you do in an hour."

I hung my head.

"But I am ugly; and I get nothing by begging," I said to him, for I was ashamed, as young things are, of being ashamed of wrong-doing.

"That is another affair then," said the cobbler. "If you cannot make fraud succeed, it is just as well to be honest. If you cannot get this world, you may as well have a try for the next. Here and there are a few people who cannot get a lie out of their mouths—just as there are folks colour-blind, who cannot see the red in an apple. When one is deficient like that, one must tell the truth, and cobble leather or break stones, for one will never make a figure amongst men. It is a misfortune—like being born dumb or a cripple; but there is no help for it. I was one of them. Your father drinks wine every night, and has his stomachfull of broad beans and good goat's meat. I taste flesh once a year, on Fat Thursday, and never know what a kid tastes like. If you want to work for your living I will teach you; but I warn you what it will cost."

"Teach me," said I; and I squatted behind his board, and pierced and bored and sewed the old leather day after day, at the old street-corner, where one could see the angel on Hadrian's tomb, and the people coming and going over the St. Angelo bridge, and the Tiber tumbling away, bilious-looking and sullen, as though angry always, because the days of Sallust were done, and the gardens, and the villas, and the pleasure places of Horace's hymning had passed away into dulness and darkness, and only

left to its desolate banks the sough of the wind in the sedges and the rustle of the fox in the thickets.

I hunted often for the fair-headed rose-child; but I never saw her any more.

Only I used to say to myself, "Cowards beg," when sometimes in the drouth of the dusty day I was tempted to drop tool and leather, and sit stitching there no more, but run out into the broad bright sunshine, and get bed and bread by just stretching out a dirty hand and whining for alms.

"Cowards beg," I said to myself, and stayed by the cobbler's stall, seeing day come and go behind the angel with the sword, there upon Hadrian's tomb. Little words strike deep sometimes—acorns, which grow to timbers, and bear safe to shore, or wreck for instant death, a thousand souls.

Whenever my father met me in the streets he struck at me with his crutch, and cursed me for letting down the family greatness, and shaming the Gens Quintilia. Italo—who was beautiful as a cherub, and knew how to look starved and woebegone after eating half a kid, stuffed with prunes—Italo was a son after his own heart, and made a dozen crowns a day by weeping, in the sweetest fashion, in the sunshine.

Italo would run to me of a night, having put off his rags and dirt, and sorrowful wounds, and dressed himself in gay shirt and silken sash, to go and dance the tarantala all night with girls at a wine shop. Italo, who loved me all the same, though I disgraced them so, would plead with all his might, and beg me to go back to the Spanish Steps and the old ways of living, and jest at me with all a Roman's wit, for sitting stitching there at gaping boots, and gnawing leather with my teeth, and earning scarcely, all the while, enough to keep body and soul together. But neither Italo's kisses nor Beredino's blows got me back to begging. I learned the cobbler's trade, and stuck to it—only running off from the stall every saint's day and holyday, to caper, and dance, and sing, and eat melons, outside the walls, as every Roman will, be he six or sixty.

So Crispin, the cobbler, I am—nothing more whatever.

I am a fool, too, of course. Rome always says so. But I was never a dullard. A good old monk taught me reading, and the like. He was a mendicant friar, but knew more than most of them, and was, in a humble, rambling fashion, a scholar, mooning his days away with a Latin book on the green hillocks that tumble, like waves, about the leagues of ruins beyond the Lateran Gate.

From him I got the little that I know, and a liking for queer reading, and a passion for our Rome. Of course, I was an ignorant youth always; my scraps of learning were jumbled piecemeal in my brain, like the scraps of cloth in a tailor's bag, which will only, at best, make a suit of motley; but they served to beguile me as I sat and tinkered a boot, and I learned to pick my way in my city, by the lights of Dion Cassius and Livy.

So I grew up in Rome; a cobbler, when I wanted to pay for bed and board; a jumble of merrymaker, and masquer, and student, and improvisatore, and antiquary, and fool, when I could make holyday about the place—which, thanks to the church calendar, was a hundred and fifty days out of the year always.

And all the time, by dint of dreaming over dead Rome, and getting my head full of republics and their glories, I used to talk in high-flown strains, sometimes, atop of a barrel in the wine-shops and fair-booths, and by the time I was twenty years old, the Papal Guard had their eyes on me as perilous matter; indeed, I should have fared worse, had it not been that I haunted the churches often from a real love of them, and had good friends in two or three jovial monks, who loved me, and for whom I did willing work without payment, any day that the hot stones of Rome scorched their sandals into holes.

But one year, when I was still a youth, there came a breath of fire upon Rome. Revolution thundered at the gates like Attila. The old cobbler was dead, and my father too. I threw my leather apron to the winds; kicked my stall into the gutter; shouldered a musket, and rushed into the fray. As all the world knows, it came to nothing. There were dead men in the streets—that was all. The Pope reigned still, and free Rome was a dream.

I had to run for my life, by night, under the thickets, along the course of the Anio, and over the old Nomentana bridge. I had a bullet in my shoulder; my feet were blistered. I had two copper pieces in my pocket, that was all. I looked up at the Mons Sacer, and tried to tell myself that it was great and glorious to suffer thus; but I fell into a ditch, and a herd of buffaloes trampled me where I lay, and patriotism seemed a dreary thing, even in Mons Sacer's shadow.

A peasant of the Campagna, whose hut stood where Hannibal had encamped, dragged me indoors, and tended me through months of sickness and exhaustion. He was a poor creature

himself, a mass of disease and weakness, and he only scraped a bare subsistence by tending cattle; but he was very good to me, a poor lad, wounded, and friendless, who would have been shot down for a rebel without his succour and shelter.

The world is bad, you know; human nature is a vile thing—half ape, half fox, most often; but here and there one finds these golden gleams; and they look the brighter for the darkness round, as lamps do in the catacombs.

Well, when I rose upon my feet again, I knew the gates of Rome were closed against me. To go back there, then, was to be shot or thrown into the casemates of St. Angelo. So there was nothing for it but to set the Anio between myself and Rome, and creep across the plains to the sea-shore, and there hide away on a fishing sloop, and cross to other lands. For the rest, I was not unhandy at other things as well as leather, and, being strong and well again, and young, had not much fear—only a great unending sorrow, because the hills hid Rome.

For, wander where one will, you know, one's heart is sick for Rome—for the fall of the fountains; for the width of the plains; for the vast silent courts; for the grass-grown palaces; for the moonlight falling on the ruined altars; for the nightingales singing in the empty temples.

I got out of my country by the way that Dante did, looking back, ever and ever, through blind eyes of pain, as he did, and so travelled on foot, as poor men do, across into the Tirolean and the German lands.

At first I settled down in Nurnberg, where I fell sick, and found friends, and was not ill-content. I was a very young man even then, and, as I sewed leather at my little leafy window, on the street that was Albrecht Dürer's birth-place, I got friends with the students and philosophers, and read many a deep old volume that they lent to me, and so picked up such scraps of knowledge as best I could, as a magpie picks up shreds and straws, and silver spoons, and shoves them all away together.

Some said I might have been a learned man, had I taken more pains. But I think it was only their kindness. I have that twist in my brain, which is the curse of my countrymen—a sort of devilish quickness at doing well, that prevents us ever doing best; just the same sort of thing that makes our goat-herds rhyme perfect sonnets, and keeps them dunces before the alphabet.

All that beautiful Teutonic world could not console me for the loss of Italy. It is beautiful, that wide, green, cool, silent

country, with its endless realms of forests, and its perpetual melody of river waters.

The vast seas of tossing foliage; the broad plains, with their great streams winding through them in the sun; the intense silence of the aisles of pine; the blue-black woods that stretched, seemingly limitless, away on every side; the hill-sides, dusky with the thickness of the leaves, and thrilled with the whisper of a thousand legends; the little burghs, vine-hidden, clustered round their chapel-belfries, and nestled at the foot of towering oak-clad mountains, or rent red rocks all fragrant with the larch and fir and bay tree; the old grey bridges, with the yellow current flowing underneath; the round watch-towers, set in the middle of the swirling streams; the black and white houses, gabled and peaked and carved, till they were like so many illuminations of the miniaturists' missals and manuscripts; the quaint, peaceful, antique homes, where the people dwelt, from birth to death, spinning their flax and shaping their ivory and wooden toys, in green nests, under grey hills, that the world knew not, and that knew not the world;—they were all beautiful, these quiet, noble, shadowy things, that made up the old Teutonic kingdoms; and I knew them well to be so. But, amidst them, I was in exile always.

Who can once have laughed in the light of the sun of Italy, and not feel the world dark elsewhere ever afterwards? And it is only in Italy that the eyes of the people, always, though they know it not, speak to men of God.

But, ere very long, the spirit of unrest possessed me, and I went hither and thither, trying all manner of trades, and even some arts, daubing on pottery—not ill, they told me—only I could not stand the confined life of any factory-room, and playing, some seasons, with travelling actors—with no bad success, since I could always make the people laugh or cry, according as my own mood was; indeed, I might have remained in that career, perhaps, only I never could constrain myself from altering the part with my own imagination, and improvisation, which put out the others, so they said; and then, again, though I am a very peaceable man, I stuck a knife into my chief, about a woman, and had some trouble that way, though it was all honest jealousy and fair fight, and the mere rights of man, let them say whatever they will to the contrary.

Into other lands I wandered, then, and sought full half the world. When one wants but little, and has a useful tongue, and knows how to be merry with the young folk, and sorrowful

with the old, and can take the fair weather with the foul, and wear one's philosophy like an easy boot, treading with it on no man's toe, and no dog's tail; why, if one be of this sort, I say, one is, in a great manner, independent of fortune; and the very little that one needs one can usually obtain. Many years I strayed about, seeing many cities and many minds, like Odysseus; being no saint, but, at the same time, being no thief and no liar.

I wandered so, I say, for a great many years, and was happy enough—the gods or the saints be praised (one never knows which to say in Rome), and should never have wished my lot bettered or changed, only—I was in exile. There were times when only to hear the twang of a lute, and see a red melon gape, under a lamp, at a street-corner shrine in old dark Trastevere, I would have given my soul away. We are made so—the fools of our fancies; and yet these, our foolishnesses, are so much the best part of us.

One day, in a little old dull French village, grey and white with summer dust, in the midst of champagne vineyards, I met a Roman image-seller—a boy of ten or twelve, with his tray full of plaster casts.

I saw scores of such lads, of course, and always spoke to them, and gave them a crust or a coin, for sake of the common country. But this little fellow happened to thrust, straight up in my eyes, smiling, a cast of that fairest Madonna of old Mino's, which I had always loved the best; she who stands in the chapter-room of St. Maria in Trastevere, with folded hands and trailing robes—snow-white, and seeming to walk forth to one from out her golden tabernacle.

Do you not know her? I dare say not—hardly anybody ever comes into the sacristy. Go, make a pilgrimage for her sake alone.

By so much as sculpture is above all colour, so is she far above in purity and dignity any virgin that was ever painted, even by our Raffaelle himself. For, somehow, on his high, wind-swept, olive-wooded slope, Mino of Fiesole did reach an imagination of the Mother of Christ that for innocence, chastity, womanhood, and sweet, dreaming thoughtfulness has never an equal anywhere. Clothed in purity, seems no metaphor, but simplest fact, before those snow-white and exquisite forms that live after him in so many silent baptisteries and sun-pierced, dusky, jewelled chapels of the dead.

And at the sight of her a very torture of home-sickness came

upon me. All suddenly, as it will do, you know, with the strongest men at the note of a bird, or the sight of a little flower, or the song of a child going down the hedgerows to meet its mother.

That little white image of the Madonna which I had loved so well, smote me with a very anguish of longing for Rome.

I seemed to hear the fountains falling through the radiant air, and the ten thousand voices of the swinging bells giving them answer, as the sun sank down behind the blue peaks of Soracte.

I saw the bridge I stood on, and the green straight lines of poplars on the bank, and the face of the little wandering boy through a rush of tears; things come on one sometimes like that.

That very night I turned my face to Rome, taking the boy with me, for he was ill-treated and unhappy.

"If they remember, and I die for it," thought I, "it will be better to die there than to live elsewhere."

But so many years had gone by, and I had been so young then, and was still so poor and lowly, I managed to escape all recognition, and by a little cunning and a little care, I got into Rome unpersecuted; and calling myself, as I had been called in Germany and France, no one recognised me. I was an ugly, homely, brown-faced man, forty years old then, and already a little grey. My father was dead; my brother had been stabbed long, long before, in a brawl, so they said; and the old cobbler, as I said, had been found dead one noonday at his stall.

Of conspiracy and combat I had had enough. I loved the sound of the fountains, and I set my board up within earshot of this one which gushes from the grey monsters' mouths here by old Ponte Sisto.

The people found me at my stall one daybreak, as they came over the bridge with their mules from the Janiculan farms and gardens, with their poultry and goats, and wines and fruits; and I had not forgotten how to play with the Roman humour, and how to hold my own between a rough jest and a ready steel. I kept a still tongue in my head as to whence I came, and the folk of the Rione had a throng of odd fancies concerning me—so best. It amused them; and many liked to bring their shoes to me to mend that they might say they had a chatter with that droll chatterbox at the corner of the Via di Pettinari.

Maryx, then a student at the Villa Medici, made for me my lovely Apollo Sandaliarius; and another student—now a great

man, too—gave me the old stained glass with SS. Crispin and Crispian, so that one might please all tastes and conciliate the good nuns and monks who went to and fro in such numbers, and wore out so many shoes upon their stone and mosaic floors.

I never told anybody, except some churchmen, that I was that Rufo Quintilio, who had first disgraced the Gens by working for my living. I re-baptised myself Crispino, after the patron saint of all shoemakers, whose church was close by; and the people had that vague idea of some mystery connected with me, which is to the public as sugared wine to flies.

That there was really none was all the better, because where there is no foundation whatever in fact, there is nothing to stop the fancy from wandering as far, and digging as deep, as ever it may like to do.

I had a friend at Court, too.

It had chanced to me in my wanderings to be once of signal service to a monsignore travelling on mystic missions of the Church. I happened to be near at hand when he fell into a deep, rapid, unpleasant little river ot Transylvania; and I pulled him out of it, whilst his attendants screamed, and his horses floundered and sunk. And in return he had bidden me claim his aid, if ever I wanted it, in our native city. Years had passed; I found him powerful, and he was not ungrateful; and he procured for me condonation of my youthful riots, and leave to prosecute my simple calling at this corner of the bridge of Sixtus, where the fountain is made in the wall, opposite to the Via Giulia; and here I became peaceful and happy enough, for I had some little money laid by (we are a frugal people), and I could sew leather three days out of the week, and all the rest of the time read old books, and peer about old places, and dream old dreams, and saunter in and out of the studios. The artists, great and small, were all fond of me, and liked to hear my opinions:—of course, only as Apelles liked to hear my fellow-craftsman's; but still it made life pleasant, for Art is, after Nature, the only consolation that one has at all for living.

They used to tell me that I had some little judgment, and that I might make a fortune if I would take to collecting and to selling ancient and artistic things. But that I would never do. To me, whoever can buy a work of true art to sell it again (save from some sudden pressure of poverty and honour), can have no love of art in him; or, thinking of it with any thought soever of barter, can have no true feeling for it, but is a huckster at soul, and deserves no better God than the base Mercurius of the

mart and change, whom the Romans prayed to when they wished to pilfer.

Art was dear to me. Wandering through many lands, I had come to know the charm of quiet cloisters; the delight of a strange, rare volume; the interest of a quaint bit of pottery; the unutterable loveliness of some perfect painter's vision, making a glory in some dusky, world-forgotten church: and so my life was full of gladness here in Rome, where the ass's hoof ringing on a stone may show you that Vitruvius was right, where you had doubted him; or the sun shining down upon a cabbage garden, or a coppersmith's shreds of metal, may gleam on a signet ring of the Flavian women, or a broken vase that may have served vile Tullia for drink.

Of course I was an ignorant man always—beside scholars; but what I did know shed a light upon my path, and made me cease to envy rich men—for was not all Rome mine?

There are worse things than to sit under Apollo Sandaliarius and Crispin and Crispian, and hear the merry Roman tongues wag round you all day long; for the epigrams of Pasquin and Marforio are but a few ripples out of many of the ever-running current of the Roman wit. And who is it that has said so wisely, "If you have nothing left in life, come to Rome"?

Here at least you shall learn your own littleness, and that of gods and men; here in Rome, which has seen Zeus and Aïdoneus pass away, and come to be words upon the mouths of men; Rome, which has beheld Olympus fade like a dream of the night, and the glory depart from Ida; Rome, which killed the Nazarene, and set Borgia and Aldobrandini up in his likeness to reign over earth and heaven; Rome, which has seen nations perish leaving no sign, and deities die like moths—yet lives herself, and still conjures the world with the sorcery of an irresistible and imperishable name.

CHAPTER V.

So I lived;—what they said of me at the bridge corner was fair enough; only that silly soul, Serafina, thought too much of a trumpery pair of little red boots for her baby, only big enough for a grasshopper, and costing one nothing but a palm's breadth of kid. But women are so; they have no medium; either they drink the sea dry and are thankless, and if they got the stars

down out of heaven, would stamp them in the dust—or else they are like the poor washer-woman, and give all their loyal soul's big gratitude for the broken crust of a careless gift.

So I lived, I say; and had done nearly twenty years, in Rome. In the summers sometimes I went up amongst the little villages on the sides of the Sabine and Volscian Mountains, under the cork and chestnut woods, where the women foot it merrily in front of the wineshop, and the pipe and mandoline chirp all through the rosy evening. But I never wandered so far away that I could not see the gold cross on St. Peter's; and many a summer day, when all in Rome was lifeless as a graveyard, and only a few chaunting friars bore a dead man through the streets, I and Palès stayed in the city for love's sake, and talked only to the gods that haunt the fountains.

I was content with my life, which is more than most great men can say. I had a love of droning and dreaming, and was well satisfied if I had enough to get me a plate of beans and a flask of thin red wine; and I had all my days through been cursed or blessed with that sort of brain which makes a man understand a great many things, but never enables him to achieve any one thing.

It is not an unhappy way of being constituted—at least, when one basks under the Roman sun, and asks no other good of the gods. All the twenty odd years since I had come back into Rome I had been happy enough in a whimsical—and I dare say foolish—fashion, here in my nook by the Ponte Sisto, close on to Tiber, where the soft hyacinthine hills curve fold on fold beyond the yellow water; and under the ilex shadows on the other bank the women hang out the linen of Rome to blow and to bleach in the breeze from the sea.

I had got with time to be a feature of the place, and to belong to it as much as the stone lions did; and the people, with that power of eternal tongue-wagging with which heaven has endowed my country-people beyond any other folk of the earth, had made as many traditions for me as though I were a headless saint, instead of a brainless sinner; and there I had stayed beside my stall, without any change, except in dogs that died in the course of nature.

My friend the ferryman, going to and fro the Ripetta Wharf, in his little brown boat shaped like Noah's Ark, passed not more regularly than the course of my own days went and came —till I dreamed my dream in the drowsy noon.

I was always dreaming, indeed: over old coins thrown up by

the plough; over some beautiful marble limb, uncovered as they dug for a wine-cellar; before some dim shrine under an archway where a fading frescoed Christ child smiled on a ruined, moss-grown torso of Hercules; on any and every thing of the million of wonders and of memories that are about us here thick as golden tulips in the grass in April. But this noonday dream was different: it kept with me all the hot slumbrous afternoon when even Palès was too sound asleep to get up and kill a fly or smell a cat. And my conscience was ill at ease; I seemed to myself to have behaved ill, yet how I did not very well know.

It seemed to me that I ought, against her will, to have gone with her to see that Syrian Jew. Her face haunted me—that pale, sad face, of unspeakable sorrow, as she had looked down the Pescheria. So must have looked Beatrice, gazing from the grated casement in the palace there.

How much one cares for Beatrice! If I owned Barberini, her portrait should hang no longer in that shabby chamber, where the very sunbeams look like cobwebs, companioned by vile Fornarina, and that yet viler wife of Sarto's; it should hang all by itself in a little chapel, draped with black, with a lamp always burning before it, in emblem of the soul, that all the brutes encompassing her had no power to destroy.

Only fifteen, yet strong as women are not, Beatrice had the strength of passion: the strength to dare and to endure. There is no passion in your modern lives, or barely any. You have lewdness and hypocrisy. They are your twin darlings, most worshipped on the highest heights. But passion you have not, so you fear it.

I was thinking of Beatrice, and of this other girl, gone after Beatrice down into the shadow of the old walls of Balbus; and was listening to the music of a lute and a fiddle chiming together somewhere on the bridge, and watching two mites of children dancing outside a doorway, with tangled curls aflying, and little naked rosy feet twinkling on the stones.

Sitting at a stall may be dull work—Palès thinks so sometimes; but when it is a stall in the open air, and close against a fountain and a bridge, it has its pleasures.

I have been all my life blown on by all sorts of weather, and I know there is nothing so good as the sun and the wind for driving ill-nature and selfishness out of one.

Anything in the open air is always well; it is because men nowadays shut themselves so much in rooms, and pen themselves in stifling styes, where never the wind comes or the clouds

are looked at, that puling discontent and plague-struck envy are the note of all modern politics and philosophies. The open air breeds Leonidas, the factory room Félix Pyat.

If I worked in an attic, and saw nought but the shoe that I sew, no doubt I should fall thinking where that shoe had been, what stealth it had stolen to, what intrigue it had stepped softly to smother, how many times it had crossed a church doorway, how many times it had stumbled over a wineshop threshold,—all manner of speculation and spite, in a word, of my neighbour who wore it, because I should see nothing but the shoe, and it would fill my atmosphere, and dwell on my retina, a black spot obscuring all creation. But here the shoe is only a shoe to me, because I see the wide blue skies, and the splashing water, and the broad sunshine, and the changing crowds, and the little children's flying hair, and the silver wings of the wheeling pigeons. I work at the shoe, but it is only a shoe to me.

When one thinks of the Greeks playing, praying, labouring, lecturing, dreaming, sculpturing, training, living, everlastingly in the free wind, and under the pure heavens, and then thinks that the chief issue of civilization is to pack human beings in rooms like salt fish in a barrel, with never a sight of leaf or cloud, never a whisper of breeze or bird; oh! the blessed blind men who talk of Progress!

Progress! that gives four cubit feet of air apiece to its children, and calls the measurement Public Health!

But I am only Crispin of the Ponte Sisto, stitching for my bread; these are fool's fancies—let them pass.

We of Italy keep something of the old classic love of air, we live no time indoors that we can live out; and though Progress is pushing our chairs off the pavements, and doing its best to huddle us sheep-like into our pens, we resist *toto corde*, and we still sit, and smoke, and saunter, and eat and drink, and pursue our trade and our talk with no roof but the bright, broad, kindly sky.

As I sat at my stall in the warm smiling afternoon, getting drowsy, tapping at worn soles, and stupidly wondering how those little things could find the fire in them to dance so in the heat, I could not in any way get my Ariadnê out of my head were it ever so, as I tinkered split leather in the sunshine.

It was as if one had seen a yellow-winged oriola, that has been fed on flower-dew and pomegranate buds, shut down into the low wooden traps that the boys go bird-hunting with in the thickets along Tiber.

The day lengthened; the shadows deepened; the air cooled; the ventiquattro rang from many clocks and bells; people began to wander out into the street.

Handsome Dea came smiling for her scarlet shoes; big Massimo swore at me good-temperedly because his butcher-boots were not ready; Padre Sylvio grumbled because his sandals lay untouched; Marietta, the vintner's wife, told me of a fine marriage that Pippo had made up for her eldest daughter with a tailor of Velletri; Maryx, my sculptor, came and talked to me of a portfolio full of designs of Bramante, that he had discovered, and got for a song in an old shop in Trastevere; even Hilarion going by with his swift horses, leaped out in his easy, gracious fashion, and bade me come up to his villa, and drink his old French wines there, whilst he should idle amongst his roses, and scrawl half a sonnet, and lie half asleep with his head in a woman's lap, under the awning on his marble terrace.

But I even let Hilarion go on his way, with that black-browed singer whom he favoured for the moment; and I did not care for Bramante's beautiful porticoes, and domes, and bridges; and heard nothing that Marietta was telling me of the fine trade receipts of that young tailor of Velletri, because I kept thinking of that sea-born Joy with the face of the Borghese bronze, who had gone down into the darkness of the Ghetto.

"Giojà! Giojà! they should have called her Ariadnê," I muttered, tossing the old bits of leather together on the board, and thinking of her likeness to that bronze and of my dream. And Marietta, and all the rest of them coming out into the cooling air as the Ave Maria rang, grew very cross with me because I did not listen to them; and Padre Sylvio came again and grumbled for full ten minutes about his unmended sandals.

He gone, there came a fisherfellow that I knew, with empty baskets on his head, and loitered by my stall a minute, a red carnation in his mouth; as big black-browed and lusty a Roman as you could want to see, who led a pleasant life enough, knee deep, for the most part of it, in the tawny Tiber water, dredging for small fish, with half the spoils of Judea, and half the glories of Nero's house, for anything he knew, under the sands that he waded on, unthinking.

He tossed me a bright little pair of shining mullets on the board as a gift.

"What were you doing in Fiumara this morning?" he asked me. "I saw you there, as I sold my fish. It was a girl you showed the way to?—yes. I spied her skirt flutter—and asked;

she went to old Ben Sulim, eh? I could have told you what he would do, the meanest, sulkiest Jew-dog in Ghetto. It was not pretty of you, Crispin—not pretty to leave her there. I would have brought her home myself, only my Candida has a jealous eye, and would welcome her with the big chopping-adze for certain."

"What happened? What did the man do?" I asked him, my conscience pricking sharply, for I had had no Candida with a chopping-adze to fear.

"Cursed her, and drove her down the stairs. What else could she look for—unless she went to buy, or took him a bargain? The rascal is so poor! I do not know her errand rightly. But so I heard. Pray, what was she?"

"She said that she was the daughter of his daughter. And he has driven her away?"

"So they said in Fiumara. I did not see myself. But if she be of the old Syrian blood, she will do well enough; the hags there will show her fifty roads to fortune. All those singing-wenches whose throats get choked with gold and diamonds, are all of that accursed race; great eyes, and a thrush's voice, and a shark's maw—that is your Jewess all the world over. Make your mind easy, Crispin. She will do."

And he went on his way with his empty baskets, singing lustily, to pour some crawfish into his fair Candida's pot at home.

Great eyes, and a thrush's voice, and a shark's maw. Well, say it were a Jewess the world over; say it were Woman—very often—everywhere; yet that did not make my conscience quieter, for the fate of that sea-born Joy swallowed up in Ghetto.

Of course it was no business of mine; of course it mattered nothing to me; still it harassed me, and made me ill at ease; so ill at ease that I stripped off my apron once again, and put Palès again on guard, and left the stall, just as the pleasant, chattering, gossiping, populace's hour of sunset drew near at hand, and went my way much faster than at noonday, down towards the black shadows of the Cenci pile.

"I am an ass," I said to myself; there was a nice little fry cooking on Pippo's stove for my eating; there was a barrel of fine Veii wine that had been given me because I had found a Venus in the vineyards that had brought a million of scudi to the owner of the soil; there was a game at zecchinetto with my neighbours, which we played so regularly after dark whenever I was not roaming; there was a strange little black-letter copy of

an annotated Satyricon that I had picked up the day before, and had barely had time to rejoice in; there were all these things and a dozen more to pass the time agreeably, for we always were merry in the Quarter of the Tanners, where the lutes twanged all night long; and yet I turned my back on them all, and went after what could be no concern of mine down into the Ghetto.

I envy the people who are occupied only with their own fortunes, and never turn aside to follow the fates of others. Selfishness is the spinal marrow of comfort. As for me, I never could help troubling myself about the troubles of other folk; I suppose when one is always mending the holes that others have trodden their leather into along the highway stones and dust, one gets a habit of sympathy with the pilgrims that break down—perhaps.

"I am an ass," I said to myself; and yet I went on and on towards the palace prison of poor dead Beatrice.

I made my way quickly into the Pescheria, and found the same two hags picking at the same old rags; they looked up and grinned.

"Are you come for that pretty maiden of yours?" they said to me. "Well, we know nothing of her; she came down the stairs as she went up them; she was barely a second abovehead. We would have kept her, for she is one of those morsels that your great churchmen love; but she would not listen, she looked stupid,—she went away yonder."

They pointed to the north-west; perhaps, I thought, she had been coming to me; my first impulse was to go and see the Syrian miser in his den; my next, to leave him for a while until I found her, for it was sunset, and night was near at hand.

I searched about the surrounding streets, asking hither and thither, but it was not easy to describe her, for in the streets she had drawn her hood over her head, and there were other girls in linen dresses. But I lighted on one or two who had noticed such a figure pass, and by these mere threads of guidance, I traced her to the Forum Romanum, and the Capitol, and the little dusky church that covers the depths of dread old Tullianum.

You think of Peter and of Paul whenever you pass there; I think of Jugurtha and Vercingetorix; *they* perished without hope. It had been better for Cæsar to have saved that noblest foe, than to have gone on his knees up yonder stairs of Jupiter Feretrius.

But for once I thought not of Cæsar, not even of Vercingetorix this summer evening, as the shadows deepened, and the bells for

vespers tolled; for on those steps of Ara Cœli I saw her, sitting wearily, her whole frame drooped together with the listlessness of bodily fatigue and moral abandonment.

There were the brick arches that artists love, and the mosaic of the Madonna above her head; there was a dim rose flush in the gloom from the set sun; within the church choristers were chaunting their lessons; the solemn strains and the distant voices sounded sad and mystical.

She was not crying, as most girls would have been, but her head was drooped, and her arms fell wearily over her knees, in an attitude which had a despairing desolation in it, mute and very deep. She must have been very tired too; and as I drew near to her I saw—for a cobbler looks first at the feet—that one of hers had bled a little, where a stone had pierced through the leather of her poor worn shoe.

Somehow—because it moved me professionally, I suppose—that little stain of blood upon the stones touched me more than the most violent sorrow and weeping would have done.

She was alone on the steps.

The place was deserted; with the glad summer night at hand, Romans had other sport than to roam under the well-known pile of the Capitol; there were blind-cat, and many another game, to play in the wide squares, gossip to hear by the cool-sounding fountain edge; figs and fish to be eaten in great piles at all street corners; jaunts out to be made in rattling pony carts along the blossoming Campagna to the wine-house; a thousand, and ten thousand things to do, rather than to come to vespers in this sad old church, or go yonder to St. Joseph of the Carpenters.

I went up to her, and touched her gently; she raised her head with a bewildered look.

"Is it true?" I asked her. "Is it true that your mother's father has driven you out so cruelly?"

"He does not believe!" she said, simply.

"Believe! But you have papers?"

"He would not look at them."

"But he could be made, forced, obliged," I said, hotly; not so sure of the law as of my own temper, and of my fierce fury against this wretched Syrian in the Ghetto.

"I would not wish it," she said, with a sort of shudder of disgust. "I would rather think that he is right—that I am nothing to him—there is some mis ke. These are the steps where Gracchus was struck down?"

"Yes; and after him Rienzi," I answered her, not wondering much at her thinking of such things at such a moment, because I always think of them myself in season and out of it. "But what did he do? What did he say? Was he indeed brutal to you? Tell me more."

"It does not matter," she said wearily. "Yes, he was unkind. But then he did not believe, you know—so it was natural."

"But why did you not come to me?"

"I went to see the Faun in the Capitol."

"The Faun! He could not help you."

"Yes. It is help—it gives courage—to see those things that one has dreamt of always. How he smiles—he does not care that Praxiteles is dead!"

There was a dreamy faintness in her voice, like the voice of one light-headed from fever or from want of food.

She was so calm and so dry-eyed, she frightened me. She was all alone on earth, and sixteen years old, and without a roof to cover her in all the width of Rome; and yet could talk of Gracchus and of Praxiteles!

"What will you do, my dear?" I said to her, trying to draw her back to the perils of her present place. "Shall I go see this Syrian, and try to soften him? If he be your mother's father, he must have some sort of feeling, and some right——"

She shuddered, and looked at me with sad, strained eyes. "No. He called my mother evil names. I would not go to him —not if he begged me. And it was so vile there, so vile, and I was so happy—thinking I came to Rome!"

Then at last she broke down into a passion of tears, her head bowed upon her knees; I think her grief was still much more for Rome than for herself. Men hate the tears of women; so do I; yet I felt more at ease to see them then.

I touched, and tried to raise her.

The singing of the choristers echoed from the church within: the warm glow died; the night fell quite; there were only a stray dog and the solitary figure of a monk—here,—where the conquerors had used to come, with clash of arms, and loud rejoicings, whilst their captives passed downward into the eternal darkness of the Pelasgic prisons.

"Come with me, my dear," I said to her, for she was so helpless now, and so young that she seemed nothing more than a child, and I lost my awe of her as of the awakened Ariadnê. "Come with me," I said. "You are sorely tired, and must be wanting food too. I will do you no harm, and I have a little

clean place, though poor; and we can speak about your trouble better there than in the street here. I am Crispin the cobbler —nothing else. But you may trust me. Come."

It was some time before she stilled herself, and fully understood me, for she was stupefied with fatigue and pain, and followed me when her passionate low weeping ceased, with the exhausted docility of a poor animal that has been overdriven.

She was only sixteen years old—and she had thought to come to the Rome of Octavia!

I led her almost in silence to my home.

As you come from Janiculan, across the bridge of Pope Sixtus, you may see on your left hand, high up in the last house wall, a window, with pots of carnations on a wooden balcony, and bean-flowers running up their strings across it, and it hangs brightly right above the water, and any one sitting at it can look right away up and down the grand curves of Tiber upon either side, with the tumble-down houses and the ancient temples jumbled together upon the yellow edges of the shores.

It is the window of my room; of course I was most at home in the open air, but I had to sleep somewhere, and the old marbles and the old books that I had got together could not lie out in the rain of nights; so this is my home, and Pippo, who lives on the same landing, cooks for me; and Ersilia, who lives below, looks after it for me; and old blind Pipistrello, who lives above, and fiddles so sweetly that all the goldfinches and nightingales high above in the woods that were Galba's gardens, strain their throats for envy, used to come and fiddle there sometimes, with his blind eyes turned to the yellow water, and the Temple of Vesta, and the Sacred Island, and the ruins of the Temple of Healing.

To this one room of mine I took my Borghese Ariadnê, who had gained human limbs, and dragged them very wearily along. What else could I do? One could not leave a girl like that to go to her death, or to worse than death, in the streets of a city quite strange to her, where she had not a friend, and only sought gods that were dead.

I talked on to her as we went, rambling nonsense no doubt, and I do not think she heard a word of it—at least she never answered; she moved dully and silently, her head drooping, her feet seeming heavy as lead. As I turned to her on the threshold of the house upon the bridge, she grew paler and paler, stumbled a little, put out her hands with a feeble gesture, and would have fallen but for me. She had grown giddy, and lost consciousness

from exhaustion and long fasting, and being in the sun all through the hours of the day. Old Ersilia was spinning in the doorway; she cried out and came to help—a good soul always, though of direful hot temper; between us we bore her within into Ersilia's bed, and then I left her for a little to the woman's care, and stood troubled in the street without.

I lit my pipe. A pipe is a pocket philosopher, a truer one than Socrates, for it never asks questions. Socrates must have been very tiresome, when one thinks of it.

With the help of the pipe I made up my mind, and went upstairs into my chamber.

It would have looked a poor, bare place enough to rich people, no doubt; but yet it looked fine to the people of my quarter—much too fine for a vagabond cobbler, even when he sat quiet and respectable at his stall, and might be almost called a shoemaker. For in twenty years' living, with odd tastes and many persons kind to me, and ideas of a dwelling-place different to my countryfolks—from having travelled far and lived with men sometimes very far above me in position of life,—I had collected things in it that took off for me its desolateness and homeliness, and made it unlike any other room in that Rione.

There were some old German pipes, with mediæval potters' painting on their bowls, relics of my old days in Dürer's city; there were little bits of delicate French china, little cups and figures and milkbowls, that women had given me in those good times of my youth and my wanderings; there were three massive old quattrocento chairs, with seats of gilded leather; there were a few old mezzotint prints, and some of Stefano della Bella's animals, that artists had given me; there was a grand old tarsia cassone, too, that Hilarion had sent there one day to be kept for him, and never had taken away again; and there were many pieces of agate and cameo, of bronze and of marble, that I had found myself in the teeming soil of the Agro Romano, as the wooden plough of some peasant turned them upward, or the browsing mouth of some ox cropped the herbage that had hidden them.

And, above all, I had my armless Mercury, really and truly Greek, and almost as well preserved as the Mercury of the Vatican; a very thoughtful, doubting Hermes, mine, as though he had just made woman, and in his young, cold heart was sorry for her, as though foreseeing that the fair and dark brothers, Eros and Anteros, would one or other always conquer and bind her, so that the wiles and ways, the facile tongue and

ne unerring sight, with which he himself dowered her, would be powerless to keep her from slavery and from kissing the steel of her chains, and from most worshipping the one who locked them fastest and made their fetters surest with a blow.

That is, I used to fancy what my Greek Hermes thought of where he stood, a fair, maimed thing, in the pentelic marble. Some said that Cephisodorus made him and some said Scopas; for myself, I loved to go yet higher, and believed that one mightier even than they did so. Anyhow, it was too good for my little, shabby, dusky, stone chamber, where it had to be companioned with oil flasks and wine flasks, and melons and cabbages, and leather and old shirts, and the straw of Palès' bedding. But when the sun came in red over the red bean flowers on the balcony, and touched his delicate and noble head, I loved him very dearly, and he gave a tender grace, of an earlier and gladder age than ours, to the old bare room upon the river, and seemed to shed a light about it that did not come from the broad blue sky of Rome.

I had a few other little things:—carved arms, whose beauty made one see the whole woman that is lost; an old Etrurian bracelet, bronze, and green as the mould that grows over the tombs of peasants and of kings; a lamp with a mouse upon it, that might have shed light upon the brow of S. Agnese herself, kneeling in the bowels of the earth, where never daylight or moonlight came; a colossal head of Greek sculpture, shattered from the throat on some day of siege when the marble temples fell like axe-hewn saplings; blackened and bruised, and cracked by fire, but with the crown of flowers and of fruit still fresh, as though Glycera had just plucked them to be mimicked in the Parian by her lover's chisel. These things I had, and they lent a grace to my attic; and now and then they offered me gold for them, and I ate my bit of black bread and refused. It was pleasant to feel that I, only Crispin the cobbler, had something the world would like to have and could not, unless I chose.

Possession is the murderer of human love; but of artistic love it is the very crown and chaplet, unfading and life renewing.

Still, though I would not sell my Hermes, I was a very poor man; for in all trades—from statecraft to shoemaking—it is he who makes holes, not he who mends them, that prospers.

"See how well I fare," said old Lippo Fede, who is a cobbler, too, in another Rione, and who one day got warmed with wine, and spoke incautiously. "Look you, Crispin, whenever I sew up a hole I slit another, just a snick with a knife—blacked over

and never seen when the shoes go home. Eh, praise the saints! the self-same pair is back upon my stall within a fortnight, and I make my moan over the rottenness of leather. But you, my dear, you mend the hole, you see, and never pierce a new one. Well you may be poor! Besides, it is not fair to the craft; not fair in any way. What right have you to mend shoes so that people, seeing how yours wear, may get to think the rest of us a set of cheats and rascals? There is no good fellowship in that, nor common sense, nor brotherhood."

Thus Fede.

You greater ones, who are not shoemakers or shoemenders, but lawgivers, book-writers, politicians, philosophers, logicians, reformers, and all the rest, do you not find Humanity your Lippo Fede? "Do not spoil trade," your brethren cry, when you would fain be honest.

But I do not drill holes, despite good Fede's grumbling and reproaches; and so I am poor.

Yet I thought to myself:—

"A girl cannot cost much to keep, not much more than a couple of thrushes, I suppose; at least, to be sure, the thrushes wear no garments; still, just for a week or two, till she can look round her, one would not be ruined. Into the streets she cannot go, and the convents would not do for her. Instead of entering Ara Cœli, she went to see the Faun."

So I thought to myself, and set to work clearing away Palès' straw nest and the old flasks, and the general litter, and smelling all the while with hungry nostrils the fry that Pippo was frying for me, and which I never should taste—at least, if she could manage to eat it.

When I had made my room neat, which was easy to me, because I can turn my hand to most kinds of work, and see no shame in any of it, when I had done it—feeling glad, I remember, to see those scarlet beans at the casement all so bravely flowering up their strings, because they might please her with the sunset-gilded water shining through their leaves,—I went down again to Ersilia.

"Is she better?" I asked, and heard that she was so.

"Then, like a good soul, take the linen off my bed up there," I said to her; "and put fresh linen on, and let her have that room of mine for to-night, at any rate; and let her fancy it an empty room we have here doing nothing."

"You know nothing of her?" said the old soul, suspicious of me.

"On my word, nothing; but I am not afraid. And you, Ersilia, my dear, you would not have wished your daughter, had she lived, to want a roof between her and the shame or the starvation of the streets?"

"No," said Ersilia, with her bright, fierce eyes dimming. She had had an only child, and lost her at sixteen years old of cholera. "No; and you have a true tongue, Crispino, and are an honest man. But if I do what you want, where will you sleep?"

"Oh, anywhere. Palès and I can always find a bed together. Go up and get the linen now, and take her there; and do not frighten her, and I will bring her something she can eat."

"But she is of foul Jew spawn."

"No more than you or I, or Palès. The Jew disowns her. Anyhow, she is a girl; and the streets are vile."

"She is handsome," said Ersilia, still suspicious.

"So much the worse for her. Go up and get the bed ready, dear Ersilia," said I.

And then I went out and gossiped a little with the people, so as to turn their hearts towards her; because, did they think her of Jewish blood, I knew they would hoot at her, to say the least, and very likely drive her out with stones, or accuse her of poisoning the bright waters of our fountain.

But I have had some skill in managing the minds of crowds; it is a mere knack, like any other; it belongs to no particular character or culture. Arnold of Brescia had it, and so had Masaniello. Lamartine had it, and so had Jack Cade.

They were all ready to hear, or rather to scream questions, which is a crowd's favourite way of hearing, especially when that crowd is three parts female. The mere sight of the tired, drooping figure following me across my threshold had been enough to set them all aflame with curiosity;—so small a thing is enough for us to chatter of, ten hours long, in Rome.

I set their sympathies for, and not against her; and told a lie flatly, and said there was nothing of Jewish blood in her, and had no time to do more, but ran in and got the fry from Pippo's kitchen. Brown and golden it was, lovely as a fry could be, hot as hot, and seething and smoking in the sweetest manner—all its little bubbles singing loud; but I covered it up, and put a nice little roll of white bread and a little fruit beside it, and put it all into Ersilia's hand, with a glass of Lachryma Cristi from the little dark hole in the stairs where I keep my wine.

I did not like to go up to her myself.

"Is she in my room?" I asked.

Ersilia nodded. She was cross; she went up into the darkness of the stairway.

I smoked my pipe in Pippo's kitchen, to escape the questions of the people; for that corner by the fountain, and the bridge itself, were growing full and resonant with voices as the evening coolness came.

Pippo, who was always deaf, and was then busy getting ready a supper to go across in a tin dish to a plump priest, had heard nothing, and so asked nothing. I was not willing that he should hear. Pippo was the best of souls, but a devout believer, to whom Jews and heretics were lower than the garbage-seeking swine. Pippo fried his cutlets by the saints' grace, and kept nigh two hundred days out of each year holy, by snoring through them, and drinking a little more than ordinary.

In half an hour's time, Ersilia came down the stairs again: the plate was emptied.

"That looks well," said I, cheerfully. "She has got back her appetite, at least."

"Nay, not a bit did she touch. She ate the fruit; I ate the fritter. It were a shame to waste good food the good saints give!" said Ersilia, and expected me to be pleased. I!—who was hungry as a peasant's donkey, and could not for shame's sake ask Pippo for another supper. Besides, his charcoal was gone out, all its live ashes being shovelled into the tin box to keep his reverence's platter warm.

"She ate nothing!" I said, ruefully And, indeed, it was hard upon me.

"The saints will remember it to you, just as well as though she had eaten it," said Ersilia, with a gleam of humour in her eyes. "It was more fit for me. She picked a little of the fruit, bird-like, being thirsty. I think she has got fever."

"You will not leave her alone?" I begged; and felt that the sharp, honest soul was worth a hundred fries and fritters.

Ersilia nodded.

"Oh, for the matter of that, they want nothing in fever; they lie like stocks and stones. But I will see to her. Where do you sleep to-night yourself?"

"I shall do well anywhere—with Palès!" I answered; and walked out, knowing they would only laugh at me for being so anxious about a stray strange girl—I, an old man, and past all follies of the heart and fancy.

Palès was sitting, bolt upright, and with a shrewd and

anxious face, beside the stall, for it was past her hour to be released; at sunset she and I were always drinking and eating cosily in some nook if it were bad weather, or off rambling beyond the gates along the broad green level if it were fair. Palès detested change of any kind: there is no more conservative politician than a dog.

But to-night I only gave her leave to go away and hunt her cats or meet her lovers, as she chose, within the length of the street and bridge, and sat down myself to my board.

"I must finish Padre Trillo's shoes," I said to my neighbours, and stitched away at them, and kept my pipe in my mouth to escape gossiping, with the little oil lamp swinging to and fro on its cord under my awning, and the people coming and going, with its light upon their faces.

"He is in one of his queer moods," they said to one another, passing me.

It is of use to have a reputation for queerness; it gains one many solitary moments of peace.

Meanwhile the night drew on, and the bean-flowers before my window up on high lost their colour in the moonlight.

I wondered what my Hermes thought of the new form that he gazed upon—he who made woman.

Have you never known what it is to believe in the thoughts of a statue? You have never lived with marble, then;—marble that speaks to you like a living thing, only that is so much greater than any living thing ever was!

I worked half the night at Padre Trillo's shoes. He was a heavy man, who trod heavily; and there was much to be done to them. The people cleared away one by one, little by little, till all the gay, mirthful, dancing, love-making, wine-drinking little groups were broken up and gone; and one began to hear in the stillness the singing of the nightingales up on high, where the woods and gardens were, and the boughs still rustled that saw Tasso die.

When I had driven in the last brass nail, there was no sound at all but of their distant singing, and of the falling of the fountain near at hand. It was an hour past midnight, the hour, you know, when the buried and forgotten gods arise, they say, and pass through Rome, weeping, bound together by fetters of dead leaves.

I laid myself down upon my plank, with Palès curled beneath it, and fell asleep: I dreamed of other lives than this, and in my dreams the nightingales sorrowing for Itys, and the

faun in the fountain water piping of dead days, mingled themselves together, and told me many things.

But who cares what they said, or would believe? These are only brown birds and perished fables—so you say! And I am only Crispino the cobbler, stitching at old leather for old Rome.

CHAPTER VI.

WAKING, the Faun was silent, and the nightingales, if they were not silent, had all their voices drowned in the loud chorus of all the other birds, which had been sound asleep all night, and now fluttered into joyousness and movement, with the coming of the day, amongst the myrtle and the ilex leaves in the monastic gardens up yonder upon the Golden Hill.

Waking, I woke cramped, of course, and cold, and with the smell of the dying lampwick in my nostrils, and the broad rosy flush of the sky like the glory of the last judgment above my head.

Waking, I wondered a moment, then looked up at my own window, where the bean-flowers were, and remembered why I was there, and thus, with Palès crouching in her straw and yawning, and the fountain so near to us both.

Waking, I yawned like Palès, and shook myself, and dipped my head in a pailful of the fountain-water, and looked, as I always look at daybreak, down the beautiful golden surface of the river, where it is all so calm and stirless, and the great black shadows lie so still, and the sails of the boats droop idle, and the ruined temples shine golden in the morning light.

Every one still was sleeping. It was not yet five by the clocks. Sweet clear-toned bells were pealing from the churches down the shores; and they and the call of a fisherman setting his *girella* in the sweep of the current, and the murmurs of the water rippling and falling, and the song of the thrushes and the woodlarks in the thickets, were the only sounds there were.

The day was still so young that no one was astir; I sat down and stitched at those big boots of the butcher; but very soon I saw Ersilia with a mop in her hand, and a pail; she came to get the fountain water.

"Your precious waif and stray is in high fever," she said to me, with that pleasure in bad news which your true gossip always takes. "Begins to say nonsense, and all that; a heavy

stupid fever—there is nothing to be done; I did not like to send her to hospital without your word, but——"

"I will go find an apothecary," said I; and went and found one; seeking an old man, as old as myself, whom I knew well.

"What little she costs shall be my charge," I told Ersilia, when I returned; and put a new little piece or two of money in her hand, because money is more eloquent than all your poets, preachers, or philosophers, and has the only tongue that, strange to no one, needs no dictionary to explain it to the simplest unlearned soul.

The apothecary said it was not dangerous, but might be long; it was the common fever of the city; tedious and wearisome rather than very perilous to life. It seemed she was always talking of Rome in a faint delirious way, and had a fancy that she had been brought there for martyrdom; only not martyrdom for Christ's sake, but for the sake of the old dead gods that every one else had abandoned, whilst she herself to them was faithful.

"An odd fancy," said the apothecary, taking snuff.

To me it did not seem so odd; *I* half believed in them, only it did not do to say so with Canon Sylvio's and Padre Trillo's shoes just taken home, and good coins paid me for them.

So she lay sick there whilst I stitched leather more steadily than ever I had done in all my life; and Palès, who disliked the turn that things had taken, almost split her triangle of a black mouth with yawning.

"You make a rod for your back, Crispin," said my friend Pippo, the cook.

"You make a clog for your hoof, Crispin," said my friend Tino, the tinker.

"You make a fool of yourself, Crispin," said all my neighbours of the Ponte Sisto corner, and the fishers watching their nets in the stream; and what was worse, the curved mouth of my Hermes said it likewise. Only the faun in the fountain water said, "When men are fools, then only are they wise;" and that little voice that lives in us, and must be destined to live after us, I think, said very clearly to me, "What matter being a fool—in other's eyes—if only thou dost right?"

I might be doing foolishly. I could not well be doing wrong. As for the rod and as for the clog, he has them both who once admits into him any human affection. But without the rod we are hard and selfish, and without the clog we are idle as feathers on the wind.

Still a fool I was; that all people around the Ponte Sisto, and in the Quarter of the Tanners, and all the fisherfolk down both banks of the Tiber, were agreed; but they liked me the more because they could laugh at me. To be lowered in your neighbour's estimation is to be heightened in his love.

Such a fool! to turn out of a good chamber, and eat sparsely, and sleep with the dog, and pay a doctor's fees, and stitch, stitch, stitch, to buy ice and fruit, and so forth, all for a stray girl, come from the Lord knows where, and of no more kin to me (if I were to be believed), than the human dust of the Appian Way, or the long-fleeced goats coming tinkling at dawn through the streets! "Eh, such a fool!" said the men and the women standing about the house doors, and under the wine-sellers' withered green boughs, and beside the bright water splashing out of the lions' mouths at our own fountain.

I let them say their say, and sat at my stall; and the girl on high, with Hermes and the bean-flowers, meanwhile was ill, as was only to be looked for after her fatigue, and the hot sun, and the pain that had met her at the close of her weary travel.

"There was the hospital," they said.

Yes, there was, no doubt; and I would speak reverently of all such places; but one would not wish to die in one all the same; and beside—I had loved women, and lost them; I knew what their fancies are, and how they shrink from things; quite little things, that men would laugh at, or would altogether disregard, but which to them are as torments of Antinora.

So I sat on at my stall through the sweet summer weather; and she lay ill up yonder behind the scarlet blossoms of my bean-flowers.

It would be foolish to say that it did not cost me a good deal. Everything costs to the poor, and costs twice what the rich would give for it. But I had a little money put away in an old stocking, in that cupboard in the wall where the wine was; and then after all no man need spend much on himself unless he chooses.

Whose business was it if I smoked but once a day at sunset? or if I troubled Pippo no more to fry for me? Smoking is dry work for the throat in warm weather; and a hunch of bread with a little wine may suffice for any mortal whose paunch is not his god.

Anyhow she lay ill up there, and I did what I could for her, stitching down below. Ersilia was a good soul, and full of kindliness; but charity is a flower not naturally of earthly growth, and it needs manuring with a promise of profit.

I do not think Ersilia left to herself would have been at all unkind, but she would have been perfectly certain of the excellence of hospitals, and the superior chances of life in them, and would have acted on her certainty with perfect honesty of intent; for people are always most honest when they are in any sincere fear for themselves.

The fever was very tedious, and the city grew very hot with the heavy, drowsy, sickly heat of the midsummer time; and the poor child lay there, parching and weary, and sleeping very little, they told me, with the glaring sun beating all day long at the closed shutters of the room, and getting through the crevices, and burning in upon her.

Once, as I thought was my duty, I betook myself down to the Ghetto, and saw the old man—Ben Sulim. He was a tall, gaunt, fierce-eyed man, who had been handsome most likely in his youth, but was hungry-looking as any vulture, and savage-looking as any wolf. He was in a miserable attic strewn with rusty dusty odds and ends of things that he had bought from rag-pickers and beggars; they said that was his trade.

I told her tale and mine with such eloquence, in hope to move him—though he looked a brute—as I could command to my usage. He heard in silence, rubbing up an old iron lock red with rust; then showed his teeth as wolves do.

"My daughter was a wanton," he said. "Her daughter—if there be one—may go and be the like for me. Get you gone, whoever you are. I am poor, very poor, as you see; but were I rich with all the riches of Solomon, the maiden—if she be one—should starve for me. I have spoken."

Then he glowered upon me with his impenetrable eyes, and turned his back, still rubbing at his rusty lock. Brutality, poverty, wretchedness; who would not deem her best saved from such a triad? I hurled a few unsavoury words at him, and told him his threshold was accursed, and departed; his mercy would have been more cruel than his cruelty.

I went and bathed in the open baths of the Tiber to be purified after all that beastliness; come what might to her, anything would be better than life with such an one as he.

It was a hot evening; I splashed and plunged, Palès with me; the water was yellow, and scarcely cool; still it was water, and so allured me; the moon was up when I returned to my corner by the Ponte Sisto. My window above the bridge stood open of course; Ersilia put her head out of it: "She is much better, she is safe to live," she cried to me.

"What shall we do with her?" I said to Palès. Palès stuck her tail out stiffly; she was not interested; if it had been a cat indeed——

Palès had been born in a wine-cart, and had at that time a lover in a public letter-writer's dog, and knew the world, and knew that your wise man does not bestir himself about another's fate—unless to lift its burden off his own.

But I have never been a wise man—or I had not now been stitching boots and shoes for the tired feet of the Roman *plebs*.

One day as I was working,—it was very early morning, and Palès and I and the Faun in the water were all alone,—two slender hands were laid upon my stall, and looking up, I saw her, just as I had seen her that day when I dreamed of my Ariadnê of Borghese; clad just the same, and looking just the same, only she had no flowers in her hands, and had the pallor of illness on her face.

Her eyes were wet with tears.

"I have come to thank you," she said, very low. "Only I cannot thank you—ever. You have been so good. I do not know what to say. And I have nothing——"

"There is no need to say," I answered, almost roughly. "And Ersilia was to tell you nothing. I mean—an empty room there doing no good to any one—and you are not even well now; should you be out like this? You cannot be very strong!"

"I awoke at daybreak, and I could not rest longer without coming to you; Ersilia would not let me leave the room before; you have been all so good—so good—and I——"

"There has been but little goodness; had there been less we had been brutes. Are you sure that you are strong enough to stand? Sit here!"

I drew my bench out for her, and she sank down on it; for me, I was stupefied by the loveliness of her, and her likeness to that Borghese bronze.

"You should be with them there in that cool green place; you and Psyche; only Bacchus should never come near to you, nor Theseus either," I murmured to myself. She lifted her head in surprise, thinking me mad, no doubt; or else not understanding, probably; for indeed how should she have understood?

She had a little tumbled paper in her hand, which she put out to me.

"This is the receipt I had given me; they were to send such few things as I had; could you ask for me? There is not much save some busts of my father's; they might sell, and pay what

is owing all this time. How long is it that I have been ill? Ersilia would not say."

"Oh, a few weeks; this is midsummer, and you will suffer from the heat," I answered her. "Yes, I will go and ask after your things; but as for payment—the room was empty, and Ersilia, I am sure, would never wish—my dear, she lost a daughter of your age."

A certain proud shadow stole over her face.

"And I am grateful. Do not think I want to acquit so great a debt as that. I only hope to pay the money it has cost. That can make no difference in one's heart. I say it very badly—but you know what it is I mean!"

"Oh, yes! I know—Palès, be silent."

"The room is your room; that Ersilia told me;" she said, with the colour rising up over her brow. "I cannot bear to be so much trouble; I wish to go away. I will try and keep myself. I can make little things in clay. I might help sculptors——"

"My dear, go back to my room, since you will have it, it is mine; and do not pain us all by taking flight like this," I said to her, feeling like a fool, not knowing what to say, and deafened with the jealous noise of Palès. "I will go and get your things when I have done this pair of boots; and do you rest, and then in the evening I will bring them to you, and we will talk. But have no fear; the gods love youth; and we are all your friends."

She thanked me once more with the loveliest smile, like sunrise illumining the sadness of her face, then went, with an obedience I could not have looked for, away to the corner of the bridge, and into the darkness of Ersilia's doorway.

I had been anxious to have her well away before all the young peasants trooped in from Janiculan with their market fruits and greenery; and before two or three students who dwelt upon the bridge, should come out on their morning stroll to the academies. There was no harm in any of these lads—but they were lads; and she was the living image of that Ariadnê away in the gallery of the Borghese, in the shadow of the old green ilex woods.

I stitched on manfully at the boots; they belonged to the blacksmith round the corner.

Why is a blacksmith always a half-heroic, and even almost poetic person, and a cobbler always more or less absurd?

Is it viler to shoe men than horses? Or is it that the grim divinity of Hephæstus and Mulciber has given a sort of grandeur for ever to the anvil and the forge? Or is it because great

Lysippus was a blacksmith? and because it was a cobbler that set the murderers on Cicero? You may make a shoeing-smith very Odysseus or Hector in your poem, and no one will laugh at you or your picture; but your human shoemaker is always beneath contempt: it is very unjust.

There was a crashing and jingling confusion of sounds, and a clatter of restless horses' hoofs upon uneven stones.

"I turned out of my way to say farewell to you, Crispin," said the sweet melodious voice of Hilarion on my ear. "No, there is nothing the matter, and it is never too warm for me; but the fancy came to us an hour or so ago; I shall be back—ah, who knows when? When they unearth any fresh nymph from my fields. Go up to the villa when you will, and how you will; go and stay there all summer through, as though I were there. But you must be at your corner when I come, or Rome will not be Rome. It could better lose the faun from the Capitol than the faun of your fountain."

He leaned downwards and shook my hands, the horses sprang forward, angry at the noise of the water; in a moment he had both come and gone; the black-browed singer, who was his latest fancy, was beside him; they swept on, and left me there.

Only a few days before he had spoken of passing all the summer in his beautiful home under Soracte; had planned a thousand excursions and excavations; it had been ascertained, or imagined, that his villa of Daïla was on the site of what had once been a country-seat of Petronius Arbiter; he had undertaken excavations on a large scale in its vineyards; a few days before they had found a broken but very lovely marble of the nymph Canens, and he was eager to lay bare the earth for more treasures; he had insisted with his charming imperious way that I should spend all the summer and vintage months with him; he had meant to banish women, to be alone, to translate the songs of the Greek of Gadarene, to write a lyric drama upon the necklace of Eriphyle—and now he was gone.

For myself I was sorrowful; Hilarion to me was both a solace and delight. Looking up at the bean-flowers above the bridge, I was glad. For she, up yonder, was fairer than that nymph Canens whom he had unearthed from his fields beneath Soracte; and he——

It was many years since I had first met Hilarion. When I had seen him first he had been only a most lovely boy; beautiful as any whom Mimnermus and Theognis delighted to sing of in their odes.

It was in an earlier time, just before I had ceased wandering about, and, being smitten with homesickness at sight of the Madonnina of old Mino, had come to set up my stall to Crispin-Crispianus.

It happened thus.

There was plague in the city of Paris; the cholera killed its thousands and tens of thousands. The gay spring and mid-summer months were made ghastly by it, and in the open-air theatre, where the comedians I then belonged to were acting and singing merrily enough for the meagrest pittance, night after night some workman or student or sewing girl would be seized with the pangs of the dire disease as they sat and laughed there, chewing a peach, or smelling a knot of jasmine, and were carried out of the place, neither to laugh nor to weep any more.

There were burning drought and hideous sickness, and people talked wildly of poisoned wells, and suspected foul faith everywhere, as they will in the fear of contagion and in the contagion of fear. I did what I could; it was not much; the silence of death made itself felt everywhere; one used to look in a sort of infuriated despair down the Seine—that had shrunk from its yellow banks—and think of Tiber and our Sacred Island, and wonder where the old fair days had gone, when in this kind of misery the Cities could pray to Zeus, and believe that they beheld him bring health and mercy as the golden serpent crept from sea to shore.

One night, in the height of the plague, going along, as the moon had risen, where the street was solitary, I met a man carrying a woman in his arms.

He cried aloud to me, and I went to him.

"It seized her a little while ago," he said to me. "We were in the opera house—my horses and servants had not come—no one would touch her; help me to get her home—if you have no fear."

I had no fear. I helped him to carry her. She was perhaps twenty years of age; not more. She was already livid and unconscious, though she writhed and moaned. She was a very pretty pink and white thing, and the jewels on her sparkled and seemed to laugh horribly in the moonlight.

He was a youth, not more than twenty himself, if so much; tall, and fair, and beautiful, with something imperious and tired on his face already.

The streets were empty, though a few folks like him were of the Decamerone temper, and went to song and feast in the midst

of the universal death; yet these were few, and carriages were rarely met, because so many had fled out of the doomed city.

We bore her between us as best we might to where she lived; it was not very far; a great place, in which she had several rooms, luxurious, and full of scattered, useless riches, such as young men lavish on such women as she was. The chambers were decorated in the taste of Paris, light and white, silver and golden.

We laid her down upon her delicate bed. I remember it was all curtained with white satin embroidered with pale roses, and above it hung a little Love—laughing. There were lamps burning, and a heavy sweet smell upon the air from jars of lilies and of hothouse flowers.

I left him with her, and ran for aid. When I found a doctor, and took him up the stairs, with one glance he saw death written there. He tried his remedies, but without any hope in their power. He, like all men in that season, had grown used to seeing human bodies drop like swarms of stifled bees. In less than an hour the girl lay dead; grey and dusky and swollen under her blossoming roses and her laughing Love. She died horribly, in short but mortal agony, and rather like a poisoned rat than like a human creature.

All the while her young lover watched her with little emotion; he seemed rather curious than pained. He was a beautiful boy —hardly more than eighteen, but no cynic of eighty years could have been colder before that deathbed than he was.

There was no farewell even between them in her intervals of consciousness. She had only muttered curses on her pain, and he had only said "Poor Lilas!" as carelessly almost as a heartless man might say a word passing a dying horse by the wayside.

When she was quite dead, he rose and offered me his hand.

"You have been so good! How can I thank you? To bear such a scene, and for a stranger. In your place I think I should have refused. She is dead, you see. Poor Lilas!—an hour ago laughing at the theatre, and counting on having a big emerald she had screamed for in the morning. It is droll, you know—no religion of any kind could explain *that*. If ever one doubted that death is an end of all things, one would know it seeing such women as these die. Think of heaven or hell for Lilas! it is making a midge a giant. She was munching sweetmeats an hour ago, and teasing me for emeralds—and there she is now, 'an immortal soul' in their jargon. Look, Love laughs—well he may. Her eternity must be about as good a jest as his."

He spoke rather with indifference than levity. A diamond flower-spray had fallen off her bosom on the bed. He took it up and tossed it in his hand.

"That was the price of the soul. Let it be buried with her as the Etruscans buried toys with their children. Come away. The surgeon will send the women, and she has no beauty to show us now——"

"You will leave her here alone!" I said in disgust at this boy, so beautiful and so brutal.

"Why not?" he said, dreamily. "It is only a dead butterfly. There was no harm in her, and no good. She was a pretty animal, with a sleek skin and an insatiable appetite. Nature made her—which was a pity perhaps; and Nature has unmade her, which is no pity whatever, though you seem to think so. What is she to me? I only saw her first three months since here in Paris. Her own Love laughs; why should any one weep? Come away; there are the women, and she is ugly to look on—all in an hour, you see!"

He took me with him through various rooms into one which looked down on a garden; we saw the stars through the lace-hung windows; there was a rich supper on the table, and lights were burning.

He poured out wine and pushed it to me, and sat down and drank himself.

I refused it. I thought he gave it me because I seemed a low fellow to him, and the kind of man to be paid for service.

"Why do you not drink?" he said, impatiently. "It is good wine—my wine—if you are doubting that."

"Death and wine do not go together, though the Etruscans thought they did," I answered him bluntly. "And I will take my leave of you. I cannot see a woman die, and laugh—if you can."

"Have I laughed? I think not. As for a woman—Lilas was not a woman. She was a pretty cat, a little sleek beast of prey, a ball of soft wool with a needle hidden in it—anything you like; but not a woman. I suppose there are women somewhere; creatures that love men, and bear their young, and are faithful. I suppose they did not all die with Andromache and the rest. But these things we play with are not women. They have as many bloodsuckers as the fish Octopus, only they are pretty to look at, and suck you softly as a cooing dove. Can you read Shakespeare? You think Dante greater? Of course you do, being an Italian. But you are wrong. Dante

never got out of his own narrow world. He filled the great blank of Hereafter with his own spites and despites. He marred his finest verse with false imagery to rail at a foe or flaunt a polemic. His Eternity was only a millpond in which he should be able to drown the dogs he hated. A great man!—oh, yes!—but never by a league near Shakespeare. Sympathy is the hall-mark of the poet. Genius should be wide as the heavens and deep as the sea in infinite comprehension. To understand intuitively—that is the breath of its life. Whose understanding was ever as boundless as Shakespeare's? From the woes of the mind diseased, to the coy joys of the yielding virgin; from the ambitions of the king and the conqueror, to the clumsy glee of the clown and the milkmaid; from the highest heights of human life to the lowest follies of it—he comprehended all. That is the wonder of Shakespeare. No other writer was ever so miraculously impersonal. And if one thinks of his manner of life it is the more utterly surprising. With everything in his birth, in his career, in his temper, to make him cynic and revolutionist, he has never a taint of either pessimism or revolt. For Shakespeare to have to bow, as a mere mime in Leicester's house!—it would have given any other man the gall of a thousand Marats. With that divinity in him, to sit content under the mulberry trees, and see the Squires Lucy ride by in state,—one would say it would have poisoned the very soul of St. John himself. Yet never a drop of spleen or envy came in him, he had only a witty smile at false dignities, and a matchless universality of compassion that pitied the tyrant as well as the serf, and the loneliness of royalty as well as the loneliness of poverty. That is where Shakespeare is unapproachable. He is as absolutely impartial as a Greek Chorus. And thinking of the manner of his life, it is marvellous that it should have bent him to no bias, warped him to no prejudice. If it were the impartiality of coldness, it would be easy to imitate; but it is the impartiality of sympathy, boundless and generous as the sun which 'shines upon the meanest thing that lives as liberally as on the summer rose.' That is where Shakespeare is as far higher from your Dante as one of Dante's angels from the earth."

He spoke with grace, and animation, and sincerity; he had a sweet voice, and a sort of eloquence which, when I came to know him well, I knew was a matter of natural impulse with him, and neither studied nor assumed. But at that moment, for a minute I thought him mad, and for another he filled me

with disgust. He drank more of his light wine when he had ceased to speak; for me, I threw the glass that he had filled me out of the window into the moonlight.

"You talk very well, no doubt," I said to him bluntly, "and about your Shakespeare you may be right. The Germans always told me the same thing, only they say, some of them, that he was Lord Bacon—which, if true, upsets your theories. But when your light o' love lies dead ten seconds ago, and you heed her no more than if she were a poisoned rat, it is an odd time to take to preach in praise of sympathy, or say pretty things about a poet."

He smiled, in no wise provoked.

"I am a poet, too, or think so—that is why. We break our hearts in verse."

"Break it in solitude, then," said I roughly. "You do not want me; you must have troops of friends; for you must be rich, or you never had been favoured by that poor dead wretch. The less I hear you talk, the less bitter my mouth will taste for the next month. Good-night to you."

I turned my back on him, surlily I dare say, for he was nothing to me except a base-souled, cynical-tongued youth, and that breed I hated, having known the true wants and woes, and the real mirthful joys of life, as poor men do perhaps oftener than the rich; that is, if they be not peevish with their poverty, which spoils everything, as sour cheese spoils the best maccaroni. But when I had crossed the room half-way he crossed it too, and overtook me.

"No—stay with me," he said pleadingly, as a woman might. "I like your face, and you were kind to-night. My friends will not come for two hours and more. The supper was fixed for late, and I do not care to be alone—with that thing dead so near."

I looked at him in surprise; there was emotion in his voice and in his face. I wondered which was real—the levity or the feeling; now I think that each was, turn by turn.

"What is that dead thing to you?" I said, echoing his own words. "She is so ugly to look at—just in an hour—and she had no soul, you know."

He looked at me with a look of curious bewildered pain, and contempt, and passion, all together.

"No; she had no soul. She is like a dead rat. That is just the horror of it. It is so with us all, of course; oh yes. But still it sickens one, in spite of reason."

He threw himself into a chair, and a dark shadow came upon his face, that took all its youth away, and made it weary. He covered his eyes with his hands some minutes; then he looked up, and rose and pushed more wine to me, saying, "Drink." I saw on his fair cheeks two great slow coursing tears. I drank his wine.

From that night Hilarion and I had often been together. We had been friends so far as two men could be, sundered by different age and different tempers, and most utter difference in all outward circumstances of life. I had learned to love him, he being one of those who compel your liking against your judgment; and Hilarion, with his strange liking in turn for me, his fancies, his riches, his grace, his charming talk, his wanton wanderings through all the realms of all the arts and the philosophies, gave me many a bright hour in my life, for which I was his debtor in many a year that brought him to that great white villa under the shadow of Soracte, which it had been his whim to buy, that he might as nearly as possible lead the life of Catullus and of Horace in this age of prose.

When Hilarion was not in Rome, or near it, I myself lost much; yet now I was glad that he was going; going far away for any indefinite space of time that his caprice might dictate.

"It is best so—be quiet," I said to Palès; but Palès was howling after him, because she adored him, as did all female things. Yet he would strike her—when he was in the mood, or she was in the way.

He killed a dog with a blow once; a careless blow of mere impatience. He gave the dog a marble tomb amidst the flowers, and wrote a poem on it that made the whole wide world weep. But that could not make the dog alive again:—poor brute!

Palès howled after him; she had seen the tomb, and doubtless heard the story from other dogs, but that wrought no difference in her, she being a female thing.

For me I was glad, as I say, for Hilarion would at times climb up into my room upon the bridge, to gaze at the Hermès, and send his many dreamy fancies out over the bean-flowers, and down the reaches of the river with the pale rings of the smoke; and he was not one whom it was easy to baffle about anything, or send on any false scent at any time.

When he told me his name that first night in Paris it was one that the world had heard of, very young though he was.

He was only a boy, indeed, but within the year then past he had leaped into that kind of sudden and lurid fame which is

the most perilous stuff that can test the strong sense of a man or a woman. It is a tarantula bite to most, few can have been bitten with it without craving for ever the music of applause, or losing their brain giddily, and dying in dizzy gyrations.

Hilarion had as much strong sense as lies in a strong scorn, and this preserves the head cool, since nothing in all the world is so cold as is contempt; but he had no other strength, so his fame hurt him, because it increased his egotism, and rendered effort needless. With different fortunes, and tossed on a sea of endeavour in a dark night of adversity, he would have been a great man. As it was, he was only a clever idler despite his fame.

That night when the poor wretch of a Lilas died he had been only a brilliant boy, but as the years had rolled on he had done mightier things, and become more celebrated. But to be celebrated is still far off from being great.

He had the temper of Heine and the muse of Musset; talent like this when given with many other gifts that command fortune, easily passes with the world for genius. And, in a sense, genius it was: only it was genius without immortality in it—it was a rose that had a stinging insect at its core, instead of the morning dew.

Life had been always smooth for Hilarion, and though the sadness in him was real and not assumed, it was that more selfish sadness which takes its rise from fatigue at the insufficiency of any pleasure or passion to long enchant or reign.

He came of two opposing races: his father had been a German noble, his mother a Greek princess; his whole education had been in Paris; he had considerable wealth, and large estates that he scarcely ever visited; he had been his own master from very early years; and in mind and person Nature had been most prodigal to him. Yet, despite all this, none could have said that he was satisfied with life: one ought to say, perhaps because of all this.

Half his sadness was discontent, and the other satiety; but this kind of sadness is widely different to the noble and passionate grief which protests against the illimitable torture of all creation, and the terrible silence of the Creator.

It is a melancholy that is morbid rather than majestic: the morbidness that has eaten into the whole tenour of modern life. Men have forgotten the virile Pyrrhic dance, and have become incapable of the grace of the Ionian: their only dance is a Danse Macabre, and they are always hand in hand with a skeleton.

This age of yours is, in sooth, perhaps the saddest-tempered

that the races of man have ever known; but this is the cause of its sadness—that it has lost the faculty to enjoy.

Hilarion, and such men as Hilarion, are its chosen prophets; and their curse is for ever on the barrenness of the land.

The old poets knew the fruitfulness of life, and sang of it. But Hilarion and his brethren only see that Demeter has passed over the earth, and that all is sicklied and sear. And their passionate protest of pain would be grand in its very hopelessness—only that it is spoiled by being too often rather querulousness than despair.

From the night Lilas died to the day he drove past me now with his Roman singing-woman the life of Hilarion had been eventful, but quite shadowless, except for that faint, gray, unchanging shadow of satiety. A shadow like death, which stretched across all his written pages: the shadow of that universal incredulity which is the note of this generation.

Horace believed as little as Hilarion; but Horace, in whose time the world yet was young, said: "Let us eat and drink and enjoy, for to-morrow we die;" and found pleasure in the *carpe diem.* But the school of Hilarion says, rather: "Of what use to eat, and how shall we enjoy? All beauty is unlovely, once possessed, and so soon we sleep the dreamless death-sleep with the worms."

Between Horace and Hilarion there is a bottomless gulf, filled with the dull deep waters of satiety; and in that gulf so much of manhood lies drowned.

An age is like a climate: the hardier may escape its influence in much, but the hardiest will not escape its influence entirely.

Now the poetic temperament is never robust; no more so than the mimosa is, or the nightingale.

The soul of the poet is like a mirror of an astrologer: it bears the reflection of the past and of the future, and can show the secrets of men and gods; but all the same it is dimmed by the breath of those who stand by and gaze into it.

When Hilarion came past me in this early morning he was many years older than when he had seen Lilas die; he was very celebrated; he had a genius that was facile and never failed him, more than a good lute does a good player; women loved, men sought, and enemies feared him; he did as he chose, and wandered where he liked, and failed in nothing that he wished. And yet I would not have changed places with him—I, Crispino, shaping leather for my bread, with a cabbage-leaf on my skull, between me and the hot Roman sunshine.

For the world was beautiful to me, and its past seemed full of wonder; and the joys and pangs of the people thrilled me like music. And when I went up and down the streets I saw faces lighten at sight of me, and I cared for that;—that is, you see, because I am an ignorant man, and was soon content at that time. Content is ignorance.

Hilarion, who had everything and knew everything, and saw ten thousand people turn to look at him if he passed through a strange city—Hilarion was restless and dissatisfied.

The parable of Paradise is a very just one. The tree of knowledge may have its roots in wisdom and its branches in action, perhaps: but its fruit is for ever unrest.

Well! he was gone, and gone far away. I sighed a little for my own sake, and stitched on in the lovely light warmth of the forenoon.

My blacksmith was a drunken, dissolute fellow; and being often idle—for shoeing-smiths are at a discount on our Seven Hills—as often as not used his hammers to split open a neighbour's brain-pan. But we do not think much of these trifles, and he paid well, and I did honour to his boots—brave boots for feast-days, that were alike his misery and glory. When they were done I left them at his place, and went on in search of the girl's things.

After much difficulty and delay—as there happen always in such matters—I found them and had them given over to me, and trundled them home upon a friendly bagarino's barrow, and sent them up to her; poor small sad burdens, smelling of the sea, and of the rosemary of the shores whence they had come.

When evening fell and coolness came, I went up, as I had promised her, to my own room, where Hermes was, and the carnations and the bean-flowers.

Ersilia had shoved the little low bedstead decorously within a recess, and made no opposition to my entrance. The girl was in the old wooden balcony, which at that time of the year, and indeed at almost every other, was brimming over with flowers. There were some small busts new to me, standing about; two in marble, a few in clay, a few more carved in wood.

She did not hear me enter.

She was leaning over the wooden rail, with her forehead against the bean-flowers, and her feet amidst the tufts of sweet-smelling thyme; and indeed, when the stars are coming out, but the sunset warmth is still upon the skies, and the river of Midas is stealing silently by to lose itself amongst the dense grass and

tangled lilies of the marshes, there are many less lovely things to do in this life than to stand thus before a window and look down through the heads of the flowers over the million roofs of Rome; over the yellow curves of the water, and the masses of trees that grow down to its edge in many places, and the gray and brown piles of the buildings, and the pines of the Pamphili and Corsini woods, and the beloved dome of St. Peter's:—the Church of the World, the Altar of the Universe.

Before disturbing her, I glanced at the busts upon the table: they were graceful things, but sadly weak. There was elegance of fancy and of outline in them, but no strength and no originality. One could well believe them the work of a man who had been a recluse and a dreamer, and had refused to do any battle with the world. There was a bust of Faunus, that was pretty;—dear god Faunus, the most despised of all the gods in this day But, then, sculpture should have so much more than prettiness. Canova's prettiness cursed him; it was almost barrenness.

"They are my father's," she said, coming in from the balcony.

She did not say, "Are they not beautiful?" Perhaps some truer, stronger artistic sense in her made her conscious where they were deficient. But she looked on them with tender eyes of lingering affection; and I could see that to part with them was hurting her.

"He was a classic scholar, I see by them?" I said, evasively; and indeed the choice of themes was far out of the common.

"A great scholar," she said, with the warmth of love upon her face. "He taught me all I know. He lived in his Greek and Latin books. The books and these are all he had to leave me."

"You know Latin and Greek?"

"Oh, yes," she answered, in a sort of surprise, as at so simple a question, as though I had asked her—had she learned to read.

"He would wish me to sell them," she said, with that look of strongly-repressed pain which gave her young face so much force. "If they ought all to go, take them all. I must owe Ersilia so much. And should I have enough to get a little chamber for myself near this, and buy some clay to work in——?"

"You cannot owe much," said I, lying, as the best of us do lie on occasion. "And one of these busts, or two at most, should bring enough to pay it all and keep you for weeks afterwards, if that be what you are thinking. You wish to stay in Rome?"

"I know no one anywhere. I have no friend," she said, with a simplicity of desolation that wounded one more than all the eloquence of woe.

"You have me, my dear," I said, huskily; for I felt like a fool, and was cross with myself for being no better and no mightier than I was, to be of use to her. "I am an old man, as you see, and of no account, and work for my daily bread; but you may count on me—I will be true to you. I can do little; but what I can do——"

"You are good, and I was ungrateful and forgot," she answered, and laid her hand in mine.

I let it lie there, and bent my head over it. I felt as any old cordwainer of Venice might have felt to Catherine of Cyprus: her youth compelled my age to loyalty.

Then I put on a sheepish look.

"Now you want a room, you say. Why not keep mine, paying me something? It would suit me very well," I said; "because, you see, my dear, I am a poor man, and of even the little you would pay I should be glad. And so we should do one another mutual service, as poor people should; and I have another place to sleep in, because, you see, I keep late unseemly hours; and Ersilia is angry if one knocks her up, and tells so quickly if one be the worse for wine; not that a Roman ever is, you know, except sometimes, in October, out of remembrance of Anna Perenna, who was not Dido's sister, oh! dear no, though the scholars tried to make her so when Hellenism became the rage, and the Julii would have it they were Trojans. We Trasteverini all say we are Trojans to this day, and indeed the story of Æneas is so pretty, one would be loth to lose it and the thirty little white pigs, and the old white-haired shepherd king of Arcadia. Will you please me, and keep the room?"

She looked at me with her clear, pathetic eyes.

"Will it really suit you? Are you sure you do not speak against yourself from kindness?"

And, may the Gods forgive me! I swore by all of them that not only would it suit, but be the making of me; and I persuaded her I spoke the truth. My marble Hermes seemed to me to smile; I suppose he was thinking how many millions of lies men have been telling for Woman's sake since first he made her out of sport one day.

But there was no other way that I could so well have served her, for there was no room empty in Ersilia's house, nor had there been one could I have been sure that I could always be

able to pay for it; but I knew that I could always lend my own and sleep with Palès, or anywhere about, on bench, or under porch, as poor men do. I might get madness from the moon, or death from the bad air: but who is sure that he is wholly sane? And better company has gone before us to the tomb than any that lives now!

"We understand one another, then," I said, after a pause, for I do not like the sadder side of life, and would always turn away from it were it possible. "I am only Crispino the cobbler, a queer fellow, as you will hear; and an old man, and poor, but very well contented—and how much that is to say! I am so glad you will keep this room. It is no use to me; my business lies in the street from night to morning, and Hermes here must be so glad to see your face instead of mine."

I then asked her if there was nothing that she had moulded herself which she could show me. She said that they were very little things, not worth the looking at, but fetched them. I found them fully worth: graceful, yet strong. Little naked figures of fisher-children, full of spirit; and some heads and figures of classic themes, treated with far more strength than was in any of her father's. One wingless Love of the early Greek poets seemed to me wonderful from such a child. I told her so.

"How can you look at them after my father's?" she said, almost in reproof. "And indeed, you know, the working was in so much his: the idea was mine and he helped me to put it into shape."

"The idea is the art," I said, angry with her that she should so depreciate herself for that dead and useless man, whom I myself could have kicked almost in his coffin.

However, I did not say that, but took two busts—the one of Heliodora and the other of the boy Zagreus looking in the fatal mirror; and I prayed her to accept hospitality of me for a day longer at the least, and left her looking out through the red flowers at the deep-blue skies of the night, with the stars shining on the moss-grown roof of the little Temple of Vesta, and in the sleepy, brown waters of Tiber.

"You are not unhappy now?" I said to her in farewell.

She looked at me with a smile.

"You have given me hope; and I am in Rome, and I am young."

She was right. Rome may be only a ruin, and Hope but another name for deception and disappointment; but Youth is

supreme happiness in itself, because all possibilities lie in it, and nothing in it is as yet irrevocable.

Ersilia hurried in at that moment, angry because the casement was open, the wind cool, the river dangerous, and all the trouble she had taken in the fever imperilled by so much imprudence.

Ersilia was a grand old Roman woman, majestic and imposing; but she was furious of tongue and violent about small things, and much given to driving other people hither and thither with her will and fiery word. Of men she had always the most miserable opinion. Pippo was the only good one of all his worthless set; Pippo, who had been her lover once and her lodger always, and who, having sung his passion to her on a lute fifty years before, now showed it in a less poetic but as palatable a manner, by frying her many a purple artichoke and golden little fish, and cooking for everybody in her hive-like house.

The busts I did sell at a shop I knew in the Spanish Square, much frequented by the foreigners. I got a small sum for each; I quadrupled it with that money in the jar in the wall, and took it to her.

"I had doubled this, but I have paid all you owe, Ersilia," I said to her. "I thought you wished it so. Also I have taken a month's rent for my room, as you desired. Ersilia will see to you. It will cost little; and she is a good woman, honest and true; you will not mind her tongue. Let it run on as we let the wind blow. Yes; those busts sold well. When you have done this money we can sell two others. You think the money too much? Pooh! Dealers know their own business. It is not for us to teach it to them."

Now, of course, all this was pure lying. But then it soothed her and set her heart at rest. She never would have taken money from me; she would have gone out and wandered in the streets till she would have fallen senseless with homelessness and hunger, and then they would have taken her to some public hospital and so the end would have come—therefore I lied.

I was thankful that I had had that little store put by in case of my own sickness or of some street accident. It was but very little; but it served its turn.

So she settled down in my chamber, nothing doubting, with a weary sort of peacefulness such as a wounded bird might feel sinking under fresh leaves after a heavy storm. She was not happy; how should she have been? But she was at rest. It was the best thing for her.

One could not do better for her; and at least she was safe, body and soul. That is much for a girl, friendless and homeless and beautiful to look upon as any jewel-like flower of the sea.

She was tired and confused and feverish still, and the great close heats of Rome, the heat that has no wind to stir, no rain to freshen it, tried her, reared as she had been all her short life on the high cliffs amongst the breeze-swept rosemary and arbutus above the blue Ligurian sea. But this she never would allow, because she would let no complaint of anything of Rome escape her.

And there was Hilarion's beautiful cool marble-paved villa amongst the flowers and the fountains, in the shadow of the hills, standing empty for all but a few idle servants; and its master meanwhile away heaven knew where—in deep Danubian woods, or beside blue northern lakes, or on wind-freshened western seas, in coolness and in calm, going wherever the current of his fancy drifted him.

The contrast made me irritable; as I never had been at such contrasts for my own sake; for it is contrast that gives the colour to life, and communism is but a poor short-sighted creed, and would make the world a blank were it reducible to practice.

For me, I have no prejudices of that kind, or of any other; when one comes of the Gens Quintilii, and is a cobbler by trade, one may be said to be bound to the two uttermost extremes of the social scale, and so may sit in judgment in the middle fairly, and survey both with equal impartiality. Where there is hatred of one or of the other, true judgment is possible of neither: that is quite certain.

So she became settled in our midst, and all the people of the Rione got to say she was my daughter whom I did not like fairly to own.

It was absurd; but they might have said worse things, and it did no harm. Indeed, in a measure, it seemed to protect her. I was thought to be very close and unpleasant because I never would talk of her, but when you know nothing it is always best to say nothing—everybody thinks you know so much. And, indeed, there was always something in her that escaped me. Her mind seemed to be always far away.

I got her some clay and she worked upon it; it passed the time for her, and she really had lovely fancies and greater skill in giving them shape than could have been looked for in one so young.

Of course they were only small things; but as she made them

I set them up upon my stall; and sometimes people bought them, and that pleased her. It served to beguile her out of that intense, unspoken, heavy sadness which had fallen on her with her pain at the ruin of Rome.

To see her work upon the clay was like seeing a young Muse herself; her close white linen dress hung almost like the tunic of Virgil's Lycoris; her arms were bare to the shoulder because of the great heat; her hair, of a rich dusky golden bronze, was like a sun-bathed cloud over her forehead; her lustrous, intense eyes were grave and brilliant with meditation and with teeming fancy. If Hilarion could see her, I used to think,—and was thankful he was far away.

With all artists, who are artists indeed and not artizans, the conception is always immeasurably superior to the power of execution; the visible form which they can give their ideas always is, to them, utterly inferior to the wonders and the beauties that they dream of; with her, of course, it was necessarily so in the very largest measure, she herself being so young and her art the most difficult of any. She saw things beautiful and perfect as all the buried treasures of Pheidias, but Pheidias himself could hardly have given them an embodiment that would have contented her.

Meanwhile her brain dreamed conjured visions; and her hands modelled in the gray clay and the red earth little heads of children and shapes of animals and of birds and of leaves that were pretty to see, and drew many an idler to them.

They sold for only a few copper pieces indeed, because the people were all poor that came near, and for the matter of that the works cost as much as the little things brought; but it kept her quiet and contented to believe that she earned her own bread and bed, and it made it easy for me to cheat her into that belief.

Indeed a baby could have cheated her; those large brilliant eyes of hers, that saw so far into the past ages and were always looking for things not to be found upon earth, saw very little way into the disguises of men and women, and the cobwebs their words weave.

It is always so; the far sight that can discern the eagle flying in the rarified air above the distant mountain snows, will not see the mosquitoes that are hissing within the distance of an inch, or the dust that lies close at hand up the corner.

The only thing I ever said to the people about her was:

"I am the cobbler of the Forum, who owned the crow, you

know this; well, this girl was the daughter of Virginius, and before that she was Ariadnê."

And this, of course, they knew was nonsense, but they laughed and they left her alone, and the good folks of my quarter used to learn to call her Ariadnê.

"I do not like Ariadnê," she said herself. "I am sorry I am like that bronze of hers. She was so faithless——"

"Faithless! She was deserted herself. Have you forgotten Naxos?"

"Oh, no. It is Naxos I mean. Why did she let Bacchus come near her?"

"But she was cruelly abandoned."

"She should have been faithful herself."

"That is saying very much."

She looked at me with a little contempt.

"She could not have helped being faithful had she been worth anything."

"That is your idea of love, then?"

"Yes."

"How should you know of it, child? What should you know of love?" I said to her.

"I have thought about it," she answered gravely: then added, after a pause, "It must be very terrible to have no life any longer of your own; only to live through the eyes and the breath and the heart of another."

"Who told you it was all that?"

"Oh! the poets; and something in one's self. It must be terrible."

"My dear! there are not many who feel love at all in that sort of way."

"There can be no other way," she said, with that soft, calm resoluteness which was so inflexible in her. There were things, one felt, in which one never could change her.

And she was right. Truly, there is no other way; the plaything which the chief number of men and women call love is no more that sacred thing, that imperishable and unutterable passion, than fireflies upon the summer night are Aldebaran and Orion.

The girl sat thoughtful, with her level brows a little drawn together and her eyes looking at the Tiber swirling round the piles of the Quattro Capi, and lapping the marshy ground of the Velabrum; great Tiber, that far away yonder in the dusky oak woods of Umbria—of that Umbria which is older than Etruria!

—runs a little rill amongst the mountain mosses; Tiber, a brook that a baby can wade and a rabbit skip across; Tiber, a mere thread of water where lovers mirror their smiling eyes, and charcoal burners dip their birch-bark cups; Tiber, that comes down from the oak woods to roll like molten bronze towards the setting sun, big with the mightiest memories of the world; Tiber, that has engulfed the statues of Etruria and the osier figures of the Vestals, and the treasures of Hadrian, and the golden toys of the Agrippinæ, and the spoils of Jerusalem, and the corpses of the Spoliarium, and holds them all fast and only yields them to the sea.

I did not like to see her so thoughtful.

"Let us go for a walk," I said to her; "the evening is beautiful. Let us go on the same pilgrimage that Ovid sent his last manuscript; from the laurels that grew before the door of his tyrant, past the Danaïds, whose labours were not more fruitless than his prayers, on to the library of Pollion in the Atrium of Liberty—you remember? Oh, yes, I can show you every step of the way. I picked it out by myself many years ago. Poor little book! Knocking at all the library doors and everywhere refused! 'Why do I send you my songs only that I may be in some manner with you,' he wrote: and how the whole nature of him is painted in those words! Ovid adored Rome. But he would have been happier in the Athens of Pericles or the Paris of our day. The smell of blood must have spoilt the moonlit nights for him when he sat by his open window looking out on the Capitol: the Capitol was all ablaze with gold then, but Freedom cannot dwell with too much gold; it chokes her as rich food does the dog. Will you not come, my dear?"

She came, and willingly. We had many such walks together when the sun had set and my work was done and the fauns were all piping in the fountains.

She was not easily tired; the fleet young feet that had waded all their few years in the clear blue shallows of the Maremma shores were as enduring as Atalanta's. Nor was she tired of my rambling talk, because all the memories and legends of the city were vivid in her own mind, and for me, I had all the crooks and turns of the mediæval and the modern streets at my toes' ends, and had puzzled out all the old Rome that lay beneath them,—Cæsarean, Latin, Etrurian, Sabine, and Pelasgic.

For myself I confess I cared most for the Cæsarean. Not for the Cæsars themselves; who can care?—but for the men who lived in all those terrible days, so terrible even at their best, the men whose books are household words to-day.

The Satires and the Fastes, the Epistles and Odes, have proved more lasting powers than the Conscriptions and the Conquests.

I had always loved to wander about and think of them, and I was glad that she would go so often with me in that black muffling which Ersilia made her wear to escape notice, only showing out of it her delicate head, with the lustrous hair wound close above it, yet always tumbling over her eyes because of its abundance.

Ersilia wished her to be veiled also, but that she would not; she wanted all the air, here where the scented winds that come through orange blooms and cedars still seem to bring some scent of murdered millions.

We would go together to the old bookstalls and hunt for quaint, black-letter folios and little old out-of-the-way volumes of classics. We would try and find out the very spot where Martial's garret was, in the Quarter of the Peartree, by the temple of Quirinus, high enough to look right downwards and see the laurels of Agrippa by the Flaminian Way. We would sit on the steps of the Pincian hill, under the palm, by what was once the palace of Belisarius, and talk of the conquests and of the cherry trees of Lucullus, and think of that awful night in these, of old his, gardens when Messalina lay on the turf amongst her bacchantes, and Vettius, climbing the trees and looking seaward, said: "I see a great storm that comes from Ostia," the storm that was bringing Death.

We would go up the Sacred Way and picture the great Roman dames getting their *strenæ* for the January visits as they get them in Paris now, and buying their false golden tresses "at the Portico of Philip in front of the temple of Hercules." We would go out at the gates and talk of the Palilia, and the Vinalia, and of Tibullus, and of the springtime when he used to leap over the fires, and sprinkle the flocks from a bough of laurel, with his shepherds up at Pedum. We would wander about amongst the vines and cabbage gardens of the Esquiline and fancy that we found the spot where Virgil lived (though no one ever will know it), and where Propertius sighed to that red and white Cynthia whose mules seemed to trot still with their tails tied up along the Appian Way.

Do you remember the day Propertius lost his tablets and bewailed them—the tablets that he wrote his prayers on to her, and on which she in return would write back "come:" was there ever another lost trifle whose advertisement has been read two thousand years by all the world?

Cynthia was a good-for-naught, and what a temper! she boxed his ears and flew on Phyllis and Teia like a fury, though the ground was strewn deep with white roses, and there was sweet flute-playing; she did not even affect to be so much as faithful; she found the rich money-lender from Illyria more solid prey than her poet, who perhaps may have been a little too scholarly for her; she painted her face, she had false hair, she drank, she gambled, she did everything she ought not to have done, that beautiful Cynthia, all lilies and roses; indeed she was just like your women of the present day in everything; and yet she has been sung of by her lover in such a fashion that the world will never forget her—no more than it will forget its Cæsars.

Such is justice; and so kind is Venus Volgivaga.

One wonders if they gave Propertius the tomb he asked her for, underneath the shelter of the leaves, unseen and unknown by all, "since crowds insult the grave of love." Perhaps they did; at any rate no one can ever find it now.

These were the things I thought of most; it may be contemptible, it no doubt is, but when I go about the Forum it is not half so much of Cicero or of Virginius that I think as it is of Horace going into that one of his bookseller's shops that was hard by the statue of the Etruscan Vertumnus; of the copyists writing in the offices of Atrectus, with the titles of the new books pasted up at the doors for the lazy people of pleasure to see as they passed to their evening drive; or of Ovid—dear, hapless Ovid—applauding above all others the statue of Aphrodite as the procession of the gods passed by, brushing the dust from the white roses of his fair friend, fanning her with the flabellum, or telling her who would win in the circus, who were the captive kings in the triumph and what the conquered countries—"yonder, Euphrates with his crown of reeds, and here with azure hair great Tigris." Ah, dear me! Ovid died in exile; and yet you call Augustus great?

But Ovid has his desire in death.

"So long as Rome shall look down from her mountains on the universe, *I* shall be there," he wrote; and he is here. He was weak in his life; but no hero ever spoke greater words than those last words of his. All the might of Cæsar cannot outlaw nor dethrone him now. He has conquered Augustus in the end.

So she and I went about the old ways together, companioned with these shades. Only she would think less of my beloved

writers, and more of Scipio and his one word Zama, of the Horatii, of the Antonines; more of the old Etrurian and Sabine Rome; more of Virgil and of his Æneas lying down at night upon the bearskins in the tent, of the old shepherd king in the shadow of the Sacred Woods upon the Palatine.

It was all true and real to her. So best. Scholars, and sciolists maybe, even more than scholars, strip the past too bare.

There never was an Æneas; there never was a Numa; well, what the better are we? We only lose the Trojan ship gliding into Tiber's mouth, when the woodland thickets that bloomed by Ostia were reddening with the first warmth of the day's sun; we only lose the Sabine lover going by the Sacred Way at night, and sweet Egeria weeping in the woods of Nemi; and are—by their loss—how much the poorer!

Perhaps all these things never were.

The little stone of truth, rolling through the many ages of the world, has gathered and grown grey with the thick mosses of romance and superstition. But tradition must always have that little stone of truth as its kernel; and perhaps he who rejects all, is likelier to be wrong than even foolish folk like myself who love to believe all, and who tread the new paths, thinking ever of the ancient stories.

Will the arts ever have a lovelier origin than that fair daughter of Dibutades tracing the beloved shadow on the wall? And whilst one mother's heart still beats amongst women, who shall coldly dissect and deny the sorrows of great Demeter?

It is all fable. It is all metaphor. It never was. One is a fool, they say.

Well, say so if you choose, you wise generations, who have made your god of a yelling steam-engine, and dwell in herds under a pall of soot, and call this—Progress.

CHAPTER VII.

The summer passed away.

Giojà was not unhappy rambling through the storied streets with me, reading my old books and all others I could borrow for her, and following out all her own fancies with the wax and the clays that bent so facilely under her fingers. She was an artist at soul, and she was in Rome; she was a child in years, and the

people that were about her supplied her few simple wants. She needed nothing more.

"If only my father were with me!" she would say, and it was the only thing lacking to her. She did not look forward in any way; she was always looking backward as students do. If she could only go and spend the long hot hours in the cool chambers of the Capitol or the halls of the Pio-Clementino, she asked nothing else of Fate.

I could not take her future so lightly.

It was not the cost of her that troubled me, that was but slight; she scarcely ate more bread than Palès; it was the character of the girl herself and her uncommon beauty.

She seemed to me no more fit for the harsh realities of the world than the marble child, that doubts between the dove and serpent in the Capitol, were fit to stop a breach in a fortress against cannon balls.

What would become of her, seen only by the eyes of Ezio the water-carrier, and Rufo the melon seller, and Tancredo the fisherman, and the youths of the tanners' quarter, and the young men from the fruit-gardens pushing their loaded beasts across her path? And her one talent, what could it avail her? It was not like the talent of the singing sorceresses who carry a life's fortune in their throats.

Marble costs gold, and sculpture is not for women. Sculpture is always an epic? and what woman ever has written one?

I wished that Maryx were in Rome.

But that very day that I had dreamed my dream before the Ariadnê, he had gone to his own country, and all the hot months went by and the city saw nothing of the great French sculptor, who was more Roman than the Romans, who had come thither a boy of eighteen to the gardens that once were Sallust's, and therein had learned to love Rome as hardly any one of her own sons could do, and wrested from its marbles and its ruins all the lost secrets of Etruria and Greece; and, not from pride's sake but from love's, cherished a tradition of his province that his own family had sprung from an old Roman stock planted in Gallic soil, by what is now called Arles, in days of Julian.

"If Maryx were here!" I sighed to myself, stitching under the Apollo Sandaliarius that he had modelled for me when he had been a lad in the Villa Medici.

And one day in autumn he passed by, and paused before me with his frank smile.

"Dear Crispin, how are you all this while? Why, how you

look! Are you still moon-struck or sun-struck by your Borghese bronze? I returned last night, and go again to-morrow."

Then his eyes lighted on the little figures and busts in terra cotta and the panels of flowers in alto-relievo.

"What are these?" he asked. "Are they your own? I know you have a Greek god and a Latin saint and a new talent for every day of the year in your calendar, I know that of old."

I told him they were not mine—that I only sold them for the artist; they stood there on my board if any one liked to buy them. Did he think well of them?

Maryx looked more closely at them, and paused the longest over a little figure of the wingless Love, a foot high, the most ambitious of all the little creations.

"Send the artist to me if he be young," he said, as he looked.

"You think well of him then?"

"What age may he be?"

"Sixteen, at most."

"There is genius in it," he said, taking the wingless Love under his arm, and laying a handful of money down for it. "Send him to me and he shall do what he likes in my workshop, and I will teach him what I can, though more probably he will only teach me."

Then he went on his way across the bridge in the autumn sunshine to his home on the old Mons Aureus; a vigorous and lofty figure, with a noble head, like the Ophidian Zeus, and gleaming eyes changeful as the skies, and the laughing mouth of Hercules.

All Rome adored and all the world honoured him. He was a great man, and happy as it is given to few mortals to be. And his fate led him that day past my stall by the fountain in the wall.

I pondered within myself all that morning, with the market people going to and fro and the crowds chattering. In the end, when evening came, I resolved to go up and tell the story of my Ariadnê to him. He was a brave man and a great one, and could be of service to her as I could not. Besides, the creature had never lived whose trust had been wronged by Maryx; the dogs of the streets knew that.

Germain Maryx had been the son of a poor stone cutter of Provence; as a child he had worked in the quarries carrying stones like a little mule; at fourteen he had tramped on foot to Paris, resolute to become a sculptor, and there, friendless and homeless, had roamed the streets like a stray dog, but keeping

ure in him by such odds and ends of labour as he could find to do in the day, and spent his nights in every kind of self-culture; at eighteen he had studied design and anatomy and the plastic arts so well that he bore off the sculptor's prize of Rome and fainted from hunger on the very day he won it; from that time with every succeeding year his fame had grown, until now there was no finer artist and no greater name in all the world.

He had a force and a majesty in his marbles that made his contemporaries' best creations look beside his but mere ornaments in sugar. Like the early Greeks he loved to "hew the rocks," and his workshop, as he termed it, was as true a temple of the gods of art as ever was raised in Attica or Argos.

Bitterly contemptuous of mediocrity, and fiercely unsparing of all affectations, Maryx to all true talent, to all unaided excellence, was liberal as the sunlight. Though his enemies were many, amongst that mere cleverness which loathes genius as the imitator hates the creator, he was beloved by multitudes as was Canova, and with as tender a gratitude.

He was very noble in his kindliness and generosity to other artists; he had that serene breadth of feeling which is so dulled and narrowed in our day, the grandeur and the liberality that made Brunelleschi and Donatello own themselves vanquished by the boy of twenty, and unite their prayers that Ghiberti might be chosen for the great work in their stead.

But then Maryx loved art; he cared but little for fame. In our day most men care much for fame, and but little for art.

"What does it matter to Jean Goujon," he would say, "that no one knows whether he really died in the Saint Bartholomew massacres or not?—where he was born or where he lived?—whether he was courted at Chernonçeau and Amboise, or whether he was but a poor carver all his days; what does it matter so long as the Diane Chasseresse lives at the Louvre, so long as every creature that cares for art, honours his name, despite all his faults, because of his love of naturalism, and of his veneration for antiquity, and of the vigour with which he called to life the still paralysed art that had been stifled and buried under the anathemas of Christian bigotry and the miseries of feudal misrule and strife.

"When one comes to think of it, after all it is perhaps greater to have been Jean Goujon, or greater still, Michael Colomb or Juste de Tours, than to have been Praxiteles. Praxiteles was born into an air full of the strength and the sentiment of art, as an orchard is full of the smell of blossom

and the promise of fruit in spring time; from the commonest things of daily usage to the most sacred mysteries of the temple, there was artistic inspiration everywhere around him. But those old earliest sculptors of the Valois France, came after ages of riot, of bloodshed, of sensuality, and of brutality. Religion was gross, war alone was deemed heroic, and the people were beyond all measure wretched; it is a miracle that those few scattered early artists snatched sculpture out from the ossification of the ossuaries and the imprecation of the preachers, and found force to be so all unlike their age.

"To go against all the temper of your age, that is the true greatness; it is easy enough to go with it.

"Now only reflect, William of Paris did not scruple to call sculptors to build him up a mighty tomb for his cook, and it was already the sixteenth century when Thévet, still, in his biographies of the illustrious, excused himself with humble apology for naming an artist amongst them!

"Things were otherwise on the southern side of the Alps to be sure; in Italy there were royal roads and golden wheels to art; and that is just why I care so much for those old early Breton and Gascon and Touraine sculptors of ours, because they must have fought their fight in so much single-handed, and with such a red fierce world of war around them, and because they were bidden only to carve recumbent knights and meek veiled saints and all the sad unlovely symbolism of the church, and yet did find their way to lovelines and to liberty somehow. Their art is not my art, nor are my ways their ways. Yet do I care for them and honour them.

"The fourteenth century used to say of the Virgin of Senlis, so full was it of majesty and grace, that any one would take it to be the work of Pheidias or Lysippus. We should not be likely now to make that error nor any similar one. But we may keep our souls for the eternal youth of Pheidias, and give some of our hearts to the old Gothic sculptors who had only those two grim spouses, War and Death, to make the noblest marriage out of that they could."

So Maryx would talk by the hour when the mood was upon him, having that catholic love of art to which nothing in all the circles of the arts is alien, and which invests with sacredness and interest the curled rim of a Koln potter's jug as the perfect lines of a frieze of Bryaxis, the interest only different in degree but not in kind, and as unlike to that narrowed eclecticism, which sees no salvation outside the limits of a school, as the

leap and light of our broad Roman fountains is unlike to a cup of iced water held in a miser's hand.

He was a great man and a good. And Fate would lead him by under my Apollo Sandaliarius!

Well, Fortune had been kind to him for five and twenty years. Perhaps she was tired and wanted change.

"I will go and tell him," I thought to myself. "It is not as if it were Hilarion—— "

So I took my way over the bridge to the house that he had built for himself upon Janiculan with the oak woods of the Pamfili-Doria above it and below the cypresses of S. Onofrio, and the fall of the Pauline waters near enough for its cool sound to be audible always through his gardens' silence when the church bells were still.

It was a beautiful house; as nearly Greek as it was possible to make it: its white marbles shone through groves of magnolia and cypress, its walls were painted with frescoes of the Consualia and the Floralia, and all the Latin and Sabine feasts of spring and summer; the doves fluttered their pretty wings in the fountain in the atrium; mystical Dædalus might have dwelt there and been at home, or Gitiadas or Pheidias, though by the way the Greeks knew not the joys of the open court—if we may believe Vitruvius, which I for my part do not always do. But, perhaps, that is my presumption; all cobblers, from the days of Apelles downwards, have been sad meddlers with things beyond them.

Maryx had built his home, and loved it as men love that which long effort and proud labour have made theirs; he loved it as Rome and the world loved him.

Pomegranates and oleanders grew against its columns, its long white walls turned towards Rome, and there came no sound to it but from the chimes of S. Onofrio and the cascades in the Dorian woods.

Here he laboured, dreamed, gave his marble life, and knew himself greater than monarchs; and in a wing of this beautiful house lived also a little brown woman, eighty years old and more, who wore the high white cap of a Provençal peasant, and was happiest when she was spinning coarse flax at a wheel.

"This is my mother," Maryx would say to all the mighty persons who from time to time visited him, and the little brown woman would spin on, neither disturbed by fear nor triumph.

She had seen her husband brought, crushed to death, from under a great rock that he had helped to split; and two of her

sons had gone down with their coasting brig carrying marbles in the gulf, and a third had been shot in a revolt of the people in the streets of Lyons; and that was all so very long ago, and this, her only remaining lad, had come to be a great man, and rich, and sought by kings, and treating nobles as his equals! She did not comprehend; she span and told her beads.

As for himself, he never let a day go by without paying homage to the little olive-skinned woman in the high winged cap with the big gold pins; and though he was a pagan, and believed in no gods—as how should any one believe who knows that Athene was hurled from the Acropolis, and that even the sanctity of Delphos could not conquer Time?—still bent his head to her withered hands, and rose the gladder-hearted when she blessed him.

I climbed Janiculan slowly that evening, and went into the lovely gardens, bounded with their cactus and azalea hedges; nightingales were singing loud beneath his myrtles, and all the family of thrushes in his rose thickets.

It was sunset; through the white blossoms of his orange trees one could look down and down to where Tiber rolled by the black piles of the Ponte Rotto; and through the sharp spears of the aloes one saw the stolen travertine of the Farnese, and the dome of St. Peter's dark against the pale green and gold of the sky.

Maryx had been at work all day, and had just come out of his studio door, and was leaning over the terrace wall, looking as he had looked ten thousand times on that spot, whence the resolute eyes of Tarquinius had first fallen upon Rome.

Scarcely any other place holds so many memories, and keeps embalmed so many legends as does this old Sabine hill of Janus, where "the darling of the gods fell asleep full of days upon its shining sands." From Ancus Marcius and Lars Porsenna to sad Tasso and soft Raffaelle, all are here. Mutius Scævola and Clœlia haunt it, and the singing children of S. Philip Neri—wider contrast no spot on earth hardly can hold.

When Tarquin stood here that memorable day,—as into his restless and ambitious soul the desire to leave those quiet hills above the Marta first had entered,—the wild woods that harboured wolves and bears, still were dark about what was even then the old citadel of the warriors of the lance; and Janus, who had his altars here, was even then a god hoary with many years. It is strange to think of how near one seems to them, all those dead peoples and dead deities.

Janus, with his keys of peace and war, has passed into a mere memory, powerless, and without worshippers; soon Peter, with his keys of heaven and earth, will have done the same.

What will men worship then, I wonder?

Mercurius, under some new name or another, no doubt. He is the only god that never perishes.

Maryx welcomed me with a smile; king or cobbler, you were alike welcome to him had you only a frank purpose and a reverence for the arts. People accused him, indeed, of being too off-hand and haughty with his many princes, but no one ever found him otherwise than pitiful and generous to the poor. "I have known their pains," he would say to those who thought he gave too much away.

He heard my little story attentively, leaning over the balustrade of his terrace, looking down over his roses and aloes, and the white bells of the flowering yuccas, to the trees that enshrined the Galatea of Raffaelle, and the marshy grounds far below of the Velabrum, where the reedy waters had drowned Sabine and Latin in unrelenting struggle.

"I wish it were a youth," he said, when I had told him all. "One could do so much more, so much more easily. Besides——"

Besides, though he did not finish his phrase, the great sculptor thought no woman worthy of his art.

"But you said there was genius in it?" I said to him reminding him of the wingless Love.

"There is. But it may have been her father's."

"But if she could do but small, slight things, only to keep herself—she has nothing else!" I added, at a hazard.

The lustrous eyes of Maryx, wide, brilliant, and brown, under brows fit for a Greek Zeus, lighted in wrath.

"No, no. That is accursed! To touch Art without a right to touch it, merely as a means to find bread—you are too honest to think of such a thing. Unless Art be adored for its own sake and purely, it must be left alone. Philip of Macedon had every free man's child taught Art; I would have every boy and girl taught its sacredness; so, we might in time get back some accuracy of taste in the public, some conscientiousness of production in the artist. If artistic creation be not a joy, an imperious necessity, an instinct of all the forces of the mind, let the boy go and plough, and he girl go and spin."

"All that is very well, but the wingless Love——"

Maryx smiled his frank and kindly smile, and went into his

studio, and took up the little figure, some eight inches high, in grey clay scarcely dried, which he had set upon a shelf, amongst masks and casts and busts.

He looked at it long.

"Yes. There is feeling in it, and it is not borrowed," he said at length. "Dear Crispin, I would do much more for you; let her come and study here. I go to-night myself to Paris, and shall be away till winter, as I always am; but my foreman—you know him, he is an old man and to be trusted, and can give good instruction; she can learn here, and be put in right ways, for the wrong ones in Art, as in everything else, are the easiest; she might live in the house too, only by what you say she would be too proud. Let her come, and learn. Not that I think she can ever achieve much—being a girl—and indeed why should you wish it, since you wish her well! Fame is a bad thing for a woman. She cannot wear the glory-disc that the Greeks put on the heads of their statues in public places to preserve them from the pressing and the fingering of the crowd. The glory-disc of a woman is only a crown of thorns, and the hands of the curious are always forcing the thorns in to see if the blood will flow. Still, let her learn, since there is nothing better, and she did indeed do that Love, you say. Come out upon the terrace."

So he granted what I sought, as Maryx granted almost everything that was ever asked of him.

"Did you tell Hilarion of her?" he asked, as he went out on to the marble steps.

"No."

"No? He would have written a poem on her."

"More likely he would have made one of her; the sort of poem that goes into the fire or into the dust when a few months are past."

"And yet you love him?" said Maryx, who indeed did so himself.

"Yes. One loves him. So do women. That is why he can hurt them so."

"In love there is always one that can hurt the other; it is the one that loves least," said Maryx.

"And Hilarion is always that one. Tiber down there wonders to hear us talk of love. It knows that Arno is the river of Love. Arno knew Beatrice and Ginevra. Tiber only knew Agrippina and Messalina, or, at the best, Cynthia.

"You forget Acté," said Maryx.

"She was a slave, and she loved a beast.

"Do not slight her. She purifies all those centuries of Cæsarism, reeking of blood and filth. Her beast was a god to her; she was a slave, but she was faithful. Your loveliest of all the saints, Francesca Romana, could find no higher law to give than 'Love and be faithful.' That Asiatic girl of Nero's had found that law a thousand years before her."

The last glow from the set sun faded off the pale sea-green of the evening sky; far below on the bridge a little light shone under the dark clustered roofs of the houses; it was the lamp in the room where my Hermes was. Hermes, who made women out of sport!

"You have not seen my Actea?" said Maryx, turning back into the house.

No one had seen it. He had but that spring called it into life from the grey lumps of clay. It was all alone in a little room whose single window let in on it the faint light of the rising moon. He lighted a three-wicked lamp, and let me look.

It was great, like all that he did. Maryx was a mighty master of his art. He had boundless scorn for the frivolities and fripperies of modern sculpture; their puerilities were to him so many blasphemies; to make your marble into ribbons, and tassels, and broideries, and flowers, and express under all these tawdrinesses the *maladif* desire and the false sentiment of a hurried and heated generation—Maryx had for this as superb a contempt as Praxiteles, as stern Lysippus would have had.

Some one has very truly said that this age is not sculptural. It has no repose; it has no leisure; it has little health, physical and mental; and it has but little grandeur, moral or corporeal. Now, calm rest, vigour, and beauty, are the indispensable attributes of sculpture.

In default of these your modern stonecutter takes pretty conceits, coquetteries, ornaments, and trivialities.

He clothes his statues; instead of sinews and veins, he moulds buttons and fringes; his chief ambition is to produce a successful *trompe l'œil*; if he represent a bather, he will concentrate his talent on the towel, not on the muscles and the limbs; his sponge shall be so life-like it shall seem to be sponge itself, but the dorsal nerves will be all out of place, and the features will express nothing save perhaps some grimace at the cold of the water, or annoyance at a gnat upon his shoulder.

This may be clever, but it is not sculpture. I have seen in Paris a statue that was very much admired because of its realism; it was a peasant in a stuff gown and wooden shoes. I

have seen another equally admired because of its ingenuity; it was a masker, so managed that from one side you could see the face, and from the other side only the mask.

What would Pheidias have said of such things, or Scopas?

Breadth and simplicity are the soul of marble. It was never meant to be tortured into trills and roulades like a singer's voice, into crotchets and twists like a sugar-baker's sweatmeats. A wooden shoe!—instead of the beautiful human foot with the daylight underneath it and all the speed of Atalanta in the curve of its instep! And I have seen even worse things in modern statuary. I have seen a ball-room shoe with its high heel and its rosette. Oh, shades of Helen and of Praxiteles!

Maryx was incapable of such degradation. He had the force of Michelangelo, and he had an adoration of beauty which Michelangelo had not; Michelangelo adored the horrible, and he did not perceive where it merged into the grotesque. He has been called a baptised Pheidias—it is unjust to Pheidias, no Greek would ever sin against the laws of beauty.

This Actea was beautiful. She was seated on the ground; the head of Nero was on her lap, his dead naked body was stretched on those winding sheets, in which she was about to fold him, to lay him in his grave upon the garden hill.

All the story was there.

The anatomy was as fine as any of the Greek marbles, and on the dead face of Nero was all that perhaps only the subtlety and analysis of the modern artist could have put there; the innumerable contrasts and contradictions of that strange mind, so cruel, so sensitive, so open to the influences of nature, so dead to the emotions of humanity, so arrogantly vain, so pitifully humble (for is not he humble who pines for the applause of others?), so fated to be loved, so fated to be loathed, capable of weeping at the sight of a sunset and at the sound of the harp of Terpnos, capable of laughing at the agonies of virgins dishonoured and devoured, and at the red glow in the sky which told him Rome was burning.

In this dead Nero you could see the man who discussed like an artist the physical charms of his mother, tranquilly touching her murdered corpse, and drinking wine between whiles, and the man who, hiding like a coward in the sand hole from his death, could yet say, in full belief in himself, "qualis artifex pereo!"

It was a great conception, like all, indeed, that Maryx ever called into life from the stone; and in Actea, as she hung over the body, the "grief that cannot speak," the despair which is

for the moment paralysed till it counterfeits composure, was miraculously rendered in every line and curve of her drooping frame, which seemed frozen by the breath of that death which yet had had no meaner terrors for her.

"It is very great," I said to him, not of course that my opinion is worth anything; I am an ignorant man.

"The Nero contents me," he answered. "But the Actea—no. She is too Roman. She must be more Asiatic. I have given her the calm of the oriental, but her face is not yet what I wish; it escapes me."

"Take the face of my Ariadnê," I said; and was sorry a moment later that I did say so.

"Ay! Is it of that type?" said Maryx, with the interest of the true artist, in whom all things are subordinate to his art.

"Very much," I answered him. "And she has the intensity yet the composure—it is strange—she is so young, but I suppose so lonely a life by the sea that—— "

"I will stay and see her. It is no moment to me one day more or less in Rome. But we must wish her a better fate than Actea's."

"Do you think Actea was unhappy? Be sure *she* believed no evil of him, and she had him all to herself in death, Poppea was gone."

"You talk like a woman," said Maryx, with a smile, putting back the linen covering over the body of his dead Cæsar. I bade him good night and thanked him for his goodness, and went out through his glades of rose-laurel, all rosy-red even in the moonlight. He said he would come on the morrow and see her.

I was sorry after all that I had suggested to him to wait. We should never meddle with Fortune. When the great goddess of Præneste speaks through the mouths of mortals, it is usually to lead them, or those who hear them, astray.

CHAPTER VIII.

"My dear, you have genius," said Maryx to her with emotion in his voice when he came on the morrow and offered her his aid and his instruction with that noble frankness which was a part of him; he was touched by her beauty, but he was more touched by the love of his own art, which had been born in and lived with her on those lonely Ligurian shores.

"You have genius," he said, standing by my Greek Hermes. "And I am sure you know—genius is nobility, and like nobility is obligation."

"Yes," she said, simply, with her great eyes fixed on him; she did not say anything more, but he felt that she understood him.

"I wish to learn," she added after a pause. "I see such beautiful things, but they go away like dreams, I cannot make them stay; it was so with my father."

"It is so with all of us; with all artists," said Maryx. "Our dreams are like Etruscan tombs. When we break into them with the noise of the world the crowned shapes vanish; if we can grasp a little of the gold, a fragment of the purple, it is all we can do to bring what we have seen out to others, and show that we have been with 'the gods that sleep.' Since you have such dreams and would tell them to others, come and learn with me. At least—you scarcely want to learn, you chiefly want to acquire facility and accuracy, and they only come from long practice and a kind of study that is tedious. I modelled the human arm for three years before I could perfectly content myself, and even now—none but a fool is content with himself. And even my poor fool, Nero, never was that quite; I am sorry for Nero, are not you? If he had not been Cæsar, and so cursed, he might have been a harmless harper all his days."

"A lovely child," said Maryx to me by my stall that day. "Most lovely. And what a fate! You must let me share in your innocent cheat, and you must make believe for me that her work in my studio is worth a price. A young female thing like that must want so many comforts, so many graces, about her: how can we persuade her, she seems so proud——"

"Let her be so," said I. "And she does not want much. She has been reared in all privations except those of the mind. She is hardy, and simple in her tastes: why spoil them?"

"If she were a lad—no. But a girl—maybe though you are right. What pleases me the most in her is her impersonal love of art. She has no idea of seeking reputation for herself, of being 'great,' as little souls all seek to be; she only wishes to learn because she sees 'beautiful things.' That is very rare. Well, let her come to me to-morrow. She shall have what good I can give to her. And I will do my best by her in all ways that I can—you are sure of that."

He held his hand out to me as he spoke; the firm and delicate hand that had called such noble shapes out of the lifeless rocks.

I was sure. The faith of Maryx was strong as the marble that he carved, and as pure from stain. Yet I was not quite satisfied as I resumed my stitching under my Apollo and Crispin; I had meddled with Fate; it is presumptuous work for a mortal.

"Dig not the isthmus there, nor cut it through. Jove would have made a channel had he wished it so," said the Oracle to the Cnidians. And we are always cutting the isthmus and letting the sea run in, thinking we know more than Jove. No wonder all Oracles are tired and silent now-a-days.

Perhaps, too, my misgivings were half compounded of selfishness. I had found her, and I had done my best by her; I should have liked to have been her only friend:—only I could not isolate her so with any justice to her.

Maryx was a noble-hearted man as well as great. I ought to have stitched on with a lighter mind after he had left me, but I did not.

I was afraid that he would lead her from her simple habits with too generous gifts. Not that he was otherwise than most simple in his own tastes, but like many manly men who have borne with indifference the full force of poverty and labour, he had a horror of them as befalling women.

Now myself I have seen "the marriage of S. Francis" productive enough of peace, and I do not believe it is the lack of riches that makes misery half so much as it is the desire of them.

The modern ideal of joy lies in riches. I think it is a wrong one, certainly wrong to be placed before the people.

You think the Lancashire operative, drinking himself drunk with strong wines, and gorging every day on meat, under the smoke of a thousand furnaces, without a blade of grass or a hand's-breadth of clear sky near him for a dozen square miles, is higher and nearer happiness than the southern peasant, in the width of glorious air, with the yellow corn, and the grey olive, and the green vine about him, because he can eat but a few leaves or some chestnut bread with an onion.

Are you not very wrong? Can there be a doubt that the purer, fresher existence is far the happier, as it is far the healthier?

And even in the matter of intelligence, the true balance may incline another way than it is your fashion to think.

"Why do you call your dog Giordano?" said I once to a Tuscan contadino, who could neither read nor write. He looked at me with surprise.

"Did you never hear of Luca Giordano?" said he. "He was one of our artists in the old time."

Now pray tell me, would your Lancashire workman, yelling hideous songs in his music hall, or chuckling in a rat pit, be likely to call his dog Reynolds or Gainsborough, and say to you, "that was a painter of ours?"

There are two sides to the medal of Progress. Myself I cannot see that New York is so much an improvement upon Athens, nor the Staffordshire potteries upon Etrurian Tarquinii. But then I am only an ignorant man, no doubt, and born a Trasteverino, who loves the happy laugh of the sun-fed children, and the unobscured smile of the azure skies.

"Did Hilarion see her?" Maryx asked me next day, when I took her up to his studio, while the nightingales were still singing in the early morning. When I told him no, he smiled and frowned both at once in a way that he has.

"If he had done," he said, "he would have stayed."

"But he is not coming back for a year," said I, with a vague misgiving following his thoughts.

"He may always stay away for ten years; he may always be back to-morrow," said Maryx.

As for her, she was so entranced amongst all that marble, and so absorbed in the sense that she might follow her father's art there as she chose, that she had no remembrance of Maryx or of me. Only once, before the Actea, she turned her eyes on him, full of reverence and delight.

"You are great, as the Greeks were," she said, breathlessly.

Maryx, whom the adulation of courts and courtiers had never moved more than the stone that he wrought in could be moved by the breeze, coloured suddenly like any woman. He was pleased.

"My dear, no modern can be great," he said, with a smile. "We at our best only echo and repeat. Beside Alexander and Cæsar, Napoleon did very little; it is the same thing in the Arts. That is why I envy musicians. Their art is still only in its infancy; it is the only one that has not been excelled in past all excelling.

"But there is something there which they would not have had," said the child, thoughtfully, meaning the classic sculptors by her *they*. "They would not have understood Actea's pain; they would only have permitted it had Nero been a warrior, and strong and heroic."

"You mean that we moderns can sympathise with weakness

and failure. Perhaps it is because we are weak, and because we fail," said Maryx. "You may be right, however. The chief characteristic, the only originality of all modern art, do lie in its expressions of sympathy. We have ceased to think sorrow shameful; we have exalted the emotions; we analyse and we pity; we should hoot the first Brutus, and send the second to prison; we prefer affection to duty. Perhaps we are right, but this weakness emasculates us. And you—do you sympathise with Actea? Would you not have let that base cur lie unburied in the sandholes?"

She was silent a moment, thinking.

"No," she said, slowly; "no, I think not. You see, she loved him; and he had loved her—once."

"We are wasting time," said Maryx, shortly. "There is a square of clay upon its base within there. Look! if you have an idea, show me what you would do. But that is only for to-day; afterwards you must model what I give you to copy, and that only; and I shall make you design in black and white a long time before I allow you to touch clay and marble. Your anatomy is all at fault. In your wingless Love the shoulders are impossible. And listen—for myself I shall have little time to give you. For days you will not see me, even when I am in Rome. Giulio there, my foreman, will give you direction and instruction; and do not dream of Actea, or of any other stories. Work,—and most of all at geometry, and at drawing from the round, for of natural aptitude you have only too much. You know, in all schools of sculpture it is an eternal dispute whether modelling or drawing be of the most importance—as if both were not equally so! To acquire excellence, draw unceasingly and model unceasingly. If Michelangelo would have deigned to model, instead of dashing with his chisel at the mound of marble, with no certain knowledge of what he meant to do, he would have spared himself the mistakes which make him often unequal and unworthy, and would have made any lesser man ridiculous. You have great talent, but you need training: you are at present like a young poet who begins to write sonnets and epics of his own before he has studied Homer or read Virgil."

She looked at him with such humid and rapturous eyes of gratitude, that they would have moved a man far colder than Maryx, who had the warm blood of Provence in his veins.

"I do thank you so much, only I say it ill," she murmured. "To be with a great master in Rome—that is what I have always dreamt of; and you *are* great!"

His face grew warm.

"No, no," he said, with a certain emotion in his voice. "We are not great nowadays; we echo the past when we are at our best, we hardly do more. And for me, my dear, to do what little I can for youth, is to do no more than to pay my debt. I owe it to my country to give a little back for all she did to me. Only think what it was for a lad of eighteen to come here to the gardens of Sallust. Think what it was for me. I, having known nothing but hunger and toil and effort, the stone quarries of Provence, and the stone wilderness of Paris; having worked in wretched garrets, always fireless in winter, often breadless in summer; seldom, indeed, being able to tell one night whether I should get food enough next day to keep breath in me, I was suddenly transported from all that famine and misery, and almost hopeless conflict, to that matchless scene, to that enchanting existence! Think what such a change meant! To sit and read in the tapestried library; to roam through the ilex avenues; to lean over the balcony, and look across Rome and its plains to the very sea; to wake at sunrise and know that all day long there was no necessity to do anything, except to study the great marbles and the lovely frescoes, that 'drew one's soul outward through the eyes,' and to commune with the dead, and try and beguile out of them the lost secrets of the Arts! Ah! if ever perfect peace were upon earth, I knew it then in my boyish years at the Villa Medici. I wish I could give such years to any young life that loves the Arts. Athens herself never had a nobler thought than those years France gives her students. Only one ought to do things so much greater after them. The uttermost one achieves seems but sorry payment. There is an idea, general enough, that talent is best left alone to sink or swim. I fear that many sink who might be worth the saving. The soul may perish for sheer lack of a spoonful of soup in the mouth. Protogenes might be now a household word, like Apelles, if he had not had to live on a handful of beans, and have much trouble even in getting them. Buonarotti might have been greater without Giulio and all the meddling, dictating cardinals—that is true; but if he had had to break stones for his daily bread, he would never have had time to look up and see the faces of Jehovah and the Sibyls. I am thankful to the Villa Medici, as a bird is to the hand that opens its cage door and sets it free. It gave me the best gifts of life—leisure and liberty. They are the twin genii that the poor can never see; Dioscuri that seldom lend their lance and buckler save to a



battle already won. If any aid of mine can bring them to your side, do not thank me; I only pay to your youth the debt that I owe to Rome for my own."

The full, deep sweetness of his voice was very gentle; he spoke thus to take from her any doubt or fear that she might feel, and he told her of himself that she might know he also had passed through the lonely efforts and the wistful visions that were her portion. Then he touched her gently:

"Come and see my mother. She is old, and cannot talk to you; but it will make you happier to think there is a woman near."

He shut the Actea up in her darkness, with the nightingales singing outside; and went into another room to the lump of moist clay. Such a mere moist lump was once the Belvedere Mercury, the Thespian Love, and the Venus of Cleomenes.

Alexander used to say that the only things which made him doubt his immortality were sleep and love; I think the only things that may make men hope for theirs, are love and Art.

In this room, where she was henceforth to work—a bare place, of course, as sculptors' rooms must be, but with two great windows that looked through the orange-trees and cacti down the Golden Hill—there stood a bust of a young man, with beautiful features, dreamful brows, and the firm, cold lips that you may see in the mouth of Adrian—Adrian, who punished an epigram with death, and camo to desire death unavailingly.

"How beautiful that is! it is some god!" she said, and paused before it.

"It is Hilarion," said Maryx. "It was dono long ago——"

"Hilarion? He was a saint."

She had no love for saints; she knew that the Thebaïd had destroyed Olympus.

"Hilarion! What country is that name? Hilarion was a saint in the desert," she said again; "he was a sorcerer, too; for he made the horse of Italicus win the chariot race by a charm."

She said it seriously. To this girl, fed from birth on all the legends of the past ages, all these things were far more vivid and living than the people that went by her every day.

Maryx smiled.

"I think he is more sorcerer than saint; and he has won the chariot race with his own horses. His face and his form, too, served me for this also."

He drew the cloth off a statue of the Apollo Citharœdus, a copy of one of his works that had raised a storm of adulation

round his name in the salon of Paris years before, and was now in the Glyptotheké of Munich.

It was different to any Apollo of the ancient marbles, and there was a certain melancholy in its divine dignity, and perfect grace, as though the god had let fall his lyre out of very weariness, thinking that he who could move the very rocks by music, and tame the beasts of the forest and desert, and charm the souls of men with irresistible influence till they wept like little children, yet could be baffled and betrayed by the low cunning of his brother, of the boy whom men worshipped when they wished to lie and cheat.

"Oh, it is all wrong," said Maryx, as she gazed. "It is modern feeling; it is too subjective; it is not Greek at all; it is a poet, not a god. It is Alfred de Musset, it is not Apollo. Yes, the world went mad for it; but that is no proof of excellence. I have done better things, though one never creates as greatly as one imagines."

"He must be beautiful!" she said, under her breath, with her eyes lifted to the face of Apollo. "Is he as beautiful as that?" she asked.

Maryx threw a cloth over the bust.

CHAPTER IX.

The mother of Maryx was growing very old. The hard life of the poor enfeebles as age comes on the frame that it braced in earlier life.

She had known heat and cold, and hunger and pain, all her youth through. Now that her son was a great man, and kept her in comfort, and women waited on all her wants, and she dwelt in beautiful chambers, she did not understand.

She would have liked to go and wash the vegetables for the soup; she would have liked to have gone with her hoe out in the cabbage ground; she thought that it was only yesterday that they had brought her the dead body out of the quarry. She was very quiet, and spun on at the flax;—a little brown woman, like a squirrel, with bright eyes, who was always bewildered when her wooden shoes that she would not change sank into the soft thick carpets, and when she saw the great grand people round her son.

"I must cost him so much; if he would only let me wear my

old gowns," she would say. And—like a true peasant, as she was—she would hoard away all her gold pieces in holes and corners against a rainy day.

"He is so good; but he may be poor to-morrow," she would say. "For me, I would not care if it came so; I could work still. I could hoe a little, and weed in the fields. But he would not like it now: he is always living with kings."

And she would bury her money against the evil time, and spin on, that at least when the time came he should have a store of linen.

She had a horror of the statues; they were only "the stone" to her; the same pitiless rocks which had been the murderer of her husband. Like Minutius Felix she believed that evil demons hid themselves in the marbles. She detested them like the early Christians; like Martin of Tours, or Marcellus.

Could she have read a book, she would have loved better than any other that passage of Clement of Alexandria, in which he rails against "those workmen who pass their lives making dangerous toys: I mean sculptors, painters, goldsmiths, and poets."

She had lost sight of her son for years; all those years in which Maryx was studying and starving in Paris, and tasting the first deep joys of art as a student of the Villa Medici; and then all of a minute he had borne her away, and she had found him a great man, and what to her seemed surprisingly rich: she was always afraid that there was some sorcery in it. If he had made images of the saints, indeed it might have been right, but all these pagan gods and light women—it troubled her, she prayed for his soul unceasingly.

If he had not been her beloved son, and so good, she would have been sure that he had sold his soul to one of those false gods of his, with the lotus flowers on their foreheads, or with the goat's hoofs for their feet. As it was, she could not understand; so she told her beads half the day through, and though she was infirm, would go to mass every morning in the church of S. Onofrio, and with the gold and silver that he gave her—it had always to be gold and silver, she had the peasant-distrust of paper-money, and disbelief in it—she would buy prayers for him with one half, and put the rest away in little nooks and corners.

"He is a very great man, you know," she would say to me, for I could speak her dialect a little, having wandered much in that country. "Oh, yes, very very great. He chips the stones into figures as big as those that they have in the churches. His

father used to bring the stones up in square solid pieces; I liked them better; you could build with them. But I suppose these are greater. Nobody ever came to look at the square pieces. The oxen dragged them away; I never heard where they went."

And then she would spin on again, thinking. She could never understand very much, except that her youngest born was a great man, and that where they lived the Pope lived too, which made it almost like living with God. She could never understand: not any more than we, who have had the light of study on us all our days, and walk with the lamp of knowledge in our hand, can ever understand the absolute night of ignorance which enshrouds the peasant in its unbroken obscurity.

"I was always afraid of the stone," she said once after a pause, twirling her wheel. "Always. It is a cold hard thing and cruel. It let my husband toil at it all those years, and then all in a moment fell on him—how can they say it has no life? It knows very well what it is about. It kills men. My son laughs, and says it is his servant; he has mastered it; he deals it blow after blow, and it keeps still, and takes the shape he wants and will have. But it killed his father. He will not remember that. One day perhaps it will give him back his blows; that is what I am afraid of; for him, he only laughs. But I know what the marble is; I know there were ten of my family, old and young, little and big, one with another, all over the years that are gone, ten of them whom the marble killed in our own country: I am afraid.

"If he would make it into the likeness of Christ and his saints, always, nothing else," she went on, feeling the beads of her rosary, "then perhaps it might not be allowed to hurt him. But all he makes are the images of light women and blind gods that had false priests—so our priests tell one: that is not holy work. And he so good himself—an angel! Perhaps he has gone astray to the false gods, looking always at their faces, and thinking of them."

"Whatever his god be, it leads him to love his mother," I said to her.

"And that is true," she said, with her weather-worn bronzed face softened with tender recollections. "And when he was little I was a hard mother to him sometimes, for he was masterful and yet idle, and sat dreaming when others were working, and we with so many mouths to fill, and a soup-pot never full—but he is so good to me. Look! There was some monarch or another he was to go dine with—some very mighty

king, come a very long way off over the seas—and that night I was ill. I was taken numb, and dumb, and stupid; they called it by some long name; and never a moment did he leave me. He let the king send and send, and only said, 'My mother is ill, I cannot come;' and he was gentle with me like a girl. And I a hard mother to him when he was little! For boys try your patience, love you them ever so. Aye, he is good to me. May the saints render it back to him, and save him from the works of his hands. For I am always afraid. I would sooner he were taking his oxen over the plough, and I cooking, and washing, and mending, and waiting for him when the sun went down."

She would have been much happier so, in a little hut on the broad sun-fed plains of her birth, living hardly, and trudging a day's walk to sell a few eggs and herbs for a few pence, than she was in the wing of this beautiful house, where all luxuries surrounded her, and the windows of her chamber opened on the pillars of the atrium, looking across the river to the convent-gardens upon Aventine, and the ruins of the Golden House, and the marshes where Acca Laurentia reared her mighty nurslings to brave the fierce Quirites.

Yet she was proud in her way, so far as her dim mind, which had only the gleam of a peasant's shrewdness and a mother's tenderness to give it any light, and in any manner grasp the fact of the great fame of Maryx. But she was always unquiet.

"I suppose he is glad," she would say. "But for me I always thought it was bad to be lifted out over your fellows; it is always the big trees the woodman takes, it is always the finest bird that first feels the knife. Look you, when I was a little child I saw in the village a beautiful young man, and they were beating him and stoning him, and some one got a musket and put him out of his misery as if he were a mad dog, and they said they did that because he was great and rich, nothing more: it was in the days when everywhere they were burning the castles —I do not know why—that people might be free, and do nothing, they said. But how should people be free like that—the land must be turned and the corn must be beaten; and for me I can always see that young man's face, with his hair soaked in blood —it was fair-coloured hair; very likely he had a mother at home. I do not think he had ever hurt any one."

And thus she would spin on anxiously, because her son had become great and rich, and could live with princes.

Though she did not understand, she was shrewd in her way; the shrewdness that the peasant acquires as a kind of instinct of

self-preservation in the world where he has to grope his way like a beetle, with every foot lifted against him, perpetually rolling upward his ball of clay through the mire as best he can.

This day, when Maryx took his new pupil to her, she was sitting as usual in the room that, with three others, was especially her own: it opened on the atrium, brilliant in the morning-light, with its white marbles and its red roses, and its breadth of azure sky.

She was spinning; she had her wooden shoes on, for she would never wear any others; she had a little wooden crucifix near her, and a wooden rosary: she had brought them from the village; her sunken but still bright eyes lost their wandering sharpness, and softened greatly at sight of her son.

Maryx approached her, and, bending down, spoke to her some moments in her own provincial tongue, then beckoned Giojà to them.

She looked at the lovely face of the girl with kindliness and suspicion—the kindliness of the woman, and the suspicion of the peasant.

"Why do you bring her to me?" she said, sharply.

"She comes to study my art, that is all," he answered. "She is motherless and fatherless, and very desolate indeed. We must do for her what we can. I thought it would please you to see a young face near."

"It does not displease me."

She let her wheel stop, looking hardly all the while at Giojà, who stood motionless, understanding none of the words spoken, and glancing out into the court, where the doves were fluttering on the edge of the central tank.

"She comes to cut the stone?" his mother said, after a moment.

"As I do—yes."

The dark, harsh eyes of the old woman grew half angry; she knotted and entangled her hank of flax.

Her face grew very troubled.

"You make the stone into women—into the likeness of them, all evil women and light, or how would they bear the sun and the gaze of men on their naked limbs—is it fit that a girl should see that? It is shameful."

"Mother, you do not understand——"

"No: I do not understand anything. But it is shameful. What should a girl do in that place with all those carved images of vileness? She has a pure face, and a true look. Marry her, and give me little children about me before I die."

Maryx flushed all over his wide proud brows, and turned abruptly away.

"She is nothing to me. You mistake, mother. But she is very desolate. Will you not give her your blessing?"

She laid her old brown hand on Giojà.

"My dear, I bless you—yes—why not? You are young and I am old. I do not understand, as he says. But do not you touch the stone. It will turn you into its own likeness, or else kill you, making you think a stone a human thing. It killed his father. But he will not be warned."

The girl bent her knees to receive what she saw by the gesture was a benediction: the words were unintelligible to her.

"What does your mother say to me?" she asked of Maryx.

"She wishes you well," he answered. "My mother is old, and cannot speak your tongue. But you will be gentle to her. To be old is always to be sad."

Giojà was vaguely oppressed and troubled; she was glad to go out into the sunlight of the atrium, and throw grain to the doves bathing there, and watch the gauze-winged sphinxes dart through the red gold of the bignonia blossoms twisting round the columns.

CHAPTER X.

Maryx did not leave Rome that day nor the next, nor many a day after. For he found in her face the face of his Actea, and she found in him a true and a great master.

He did not copy her features line by line. She never knew that he was studying her, for he disliked every set expression, and his prayer was ever that of Diderot's artist, "Oh God, deliver me from models;" but, nevertheless, he changed his Actea's face for hers, and his statue gained the only thing it wanted, and then he stayed on to make it into marble, only going for an occasional absence, of a week or two at most; for Maryx worked, like Donatello and Michelangelo, with his own hands, leaving nothing to his workmen, save the merest elementary labour. Thus, indeed, he produced but few works as far as numbers went, compared with his contemporaries, who scarcely touch their marble themselves, and create vicariously, and so multiply with rapidity their colossal dolls and their millinery in stone: Maryx loved to feel the idea grow out of the rock under

the blows of his own chisel, and would not yield to a paid labourer the delight of carving the rounded limb and making the mute mouth smile.

When he was absent, as when he was present, the girl went backwards and forwards to the Janiculan, and learned and laboured thoroughly as though she were a male student of this the most virile of all the arts. It was not very far to go, but it is a rough, populous way until you get to the Pauline cascades and the green gardens; and Ersilia went with her in the morning, and I went for her, or the old foreman, or one of the old artizans, or sometimes Maryx himself returned with her at sunset.

She would never eat anything at his studio, though he wished it, but would take with her a morsel of dry bread and some fruit. She was very grateful to every one, but very proud in her way.

"My father always told me to take nothing; that it was the only way to be free," she would say.

So the weeks went on one after another, very quietly; and the total absorption of her into art, and her delight in it, and her patient yet passionate study of it, all brought her strength and health, and she ceased to look ill and to suffer from the heat, and became quite content. Very familiar she never became with any one, except, perhaps, with me; she had the meditative temperament of the artist, and all the turmoil and trifling of the little world around her seldom reached her ear.

As for the people of the quarter, they were always a little afraid of her, and they abandoned the idea that she was my daughter, and wove wonderful romances about her, in which princes and cardinals figured with small credit to their morality. What did it matter?

A girl who did not go to mass at any church, seemed very damnable to all the good folks of our Rione, mothers and maids, who might, indeed, have their love affairs like other women, and their quarrels, and who could sell a rotten fruit, or twist a bird's neck, or stick their bodkin in a rival as well as any one, but who always squatted on their heels right virtuously before the Madonna once a week, at least, and got the public writer at the corner to pen their little notes for them to that lovely saint, S. Luigi Gonzaga, who smiles in June like a very Adonis amongst his flowers and his love-letters.

And as for the men—well, she was beautiful to look at, certainly; but then she never seemed to know it or to want any one

else to see it, so what charm was there in it? She went on her way looking at none of them, always looking at some moss-grown roof of an old temple afar off, or some defaced fresco on some wall hard by. She made them angry, and they let her be.

She only saw Clelia pushing her horse's breast against the reedy shores of the Velabrum, or the fair-faced Improvisatore leaning from his violin a moment to watch for Raffaelle coming on the bridge.

She was very tranquil at this time, studying long and closely, and then going out into all the broad brightness of the noon, or the white radiance of moonlit evenings, and remembering all the ages of the world.

There can be hardly any life more lovely upon earth than that of a young student of art in Rome. With the morning, to rise to the sound of countless bells and of innumerable streams, and see the silver lines of the snow new fallen on the mountains against the deep rose of the dawn, and the shadows of the night steal away softly from off the city, releasing, one by one, dome and spire, and cupola and roof, till all the wide white wonder of the place discloses itself under the broad brightness of full day; to go down into the dark cool streets, with the pigeons fluttering in the fountains, and the sounds of the morning chaunts coming from many a church door and convent window, and little scholars and singing children going by with white clothes on, or scarlet robes, as though walking forth from the canvas of Botticelli or Garofalo; to eat frugally, sitting close by some shop of flowers and birds, and watching all the while the humours and the pageants of the streets by quaint corners, rich with sculptures of the Renaissance, and spanned by arches of architects that builded for Agrippa, under grated windows with arms of Frangipanni or Colonna, and pillars that Apollodorus raised; to go into the great courts of palaces, murmurous with the fall of water, and fresh with green leaves and golden fruit, that rob the colossal statues of their gloom and gauntness, and thence into the vast chambers where the greatest dreams that men have ever had are written on panel and on canvas, and the immensity and the silence of them all are beautiful and eloquent with dead men's legacies to the living, where the Hours and the Seasons frolic beside the Maries at the Sepulchre, and Adonis bares his lovely limbs, in nowise ashamed because S. Jerome and S. Mark are there; to study and muse, and wonder and be still, and be full of the peace which passes all understanding, because the earth is lovely as Adonis is, and life is yet unspent; to come

out of the sacred light, half golden, and half dusky, and full of many blended colours, where the marbles and the pictures live, sole dwellers in the deserted dwellings of princes; to come out where the oranges are all aglow in the sunshine, and the red camellias are pushing against the hoary head of the old stone Hermes, and to go down the width of the mighty steps into the gay piazza, alive with bells tolling, and crowds laughing, and drums abeat, and the flutter of carnival banners in the wind; and to get away from it all with a full heart, and ascend to see the sun set from the terrace of the Medici, or the Pamfili, or the Borghese woods, and watch the flame-like clouds stream homewards behind S. Peter's, and the pines of Monte Mario grow black against the west, till the pale green of evening spreads itself above them, and the stars arise; and then, with a prayer —be your faith what it will—a prayer to the Unknown God, to go down again through the violet-scented air and the dreamful twilight, and so, with unspeakable thankfulness, simply because you live, and this is Rome—so homeward.

What life can be fuller or be sweeter than this, even if your home be near the skies, in some old house of some crowded quarter, with the doves flying about your roof all the day long?

What matter poverty, or any straits of it, if you be young and be in Rome?

All this mighty world that has been making here for nearly three thousand years is all your own, and Praxiteles and Raffaelle are your ministers. For you, Popes greater than Emperors gathered their treasures from the east and west, and raised these endless temples of marble and of jewels; and for you they made these deep green aisles and avenues, where the ilex and the cypress intermingle, and the birds sing in the soft darkness of the boughs; not a Medici, nor a Borgia of them all, possessed the capital of the world as you can do, entering into your heritage of Art's great heirloom.

And beside a life in Rome, all life elsewhere is but barren and narrow, and must miss something both of colour and sanctity. If it were only for the endless possibilities that lie in existence here, it would eclipse all others; you may watch a cabbage garden being dug, and under the careless stroke of the spade it may yield up imperial marbles or broken household gods; you may speak to a village workman coming down from the hills into the streets, and he may give you, by mere chance, some priceless secret of the past, as only a few years since the

poor artificer of the Sabine mountains gave up the secret of the Etruscan goldsmiths' chains.

Well,—the city was full of mighty people, and stirred with all that life of fashion and of folly, which must make the old stones of the Carinæ and the Sacred Way think the years of the Agrippines are come back again to Rome. But all its fume and fuss touched my Ariadnê in no way.

Maryx, indeed, was sought by that illustrious though motley world, and could not always say it nay. But no one saw her at his house; and our own world that gossipped on the doorsteps, and clanked brass pails at the water spouts, and told its beads at the shoemaker's church, and ate its maccaroni at the street corners, and drove its mules over the bridge to the gardens, and pranked itself in gay masquerade, and beat its tambourine at carnivals, did not change in any way, but let her alone—a girl that did not go to mass and had no saint, and came the Lord knew whence.

So the months went by, and Maryx would often leave the great personages who courted him, to join her and me and Palès, when on holy days and feast days we would ramble far and wide over the city and the country round. Maryx cared but little for this world which was at his feet: he thought it monotonous, but a myope: he said to it as Pierre Puget, another Provençal, said to it when it told him that he eclipsed Pheidias, "Have you studied the works of Pheidias?"

Maryx, despite his lofty free grace and often haughty speech, kept much of the peasant in him; of the free and dauntless peasant who dwells on the broad plains, amongst his sheep dogs, and has for his couch the wild thyme once dedicated to Venus. A king could not sway him; nor either easily could a syren allure.

The wiles of women fell away impotent from this man, who could imagine and create a loveliness that no living woman ever could equal:—Helen being dead.

Gay people began to go up and down the avenues by the Lateran, and foreign crowds to saunter under the palm of Augustus, and foolish fashionable chirrupings twittered round the Moses and the Gladiator, and all the great solemn noble marbles, and mummers began to twang their lutes before the time under gloomy convent walls, and passing under the shadow of great palaces at night, one heard strains of merry music, and caught glimpses, through the vast arched courts, of ladies' gems and lacquays' liveries.

For me, I wished they would leave Rome alone. It should be visited as Mecca is; and in no other way.

But all the twitter and turmoil and flutter and frippery, always rushed in like the waves of the Goths' armies whenever winter came; and trade was bettered, and the grim old streets were bright, and not very many people came my way to the brown corner where the Ponte Sisto water fell in the great arched niche all green with moss. To me winter made no change, for my clients did not lie at all amongst that wealthy foreign world; I munched chestnuts instead of figs, and hugged a brazier instead of a water melon—that was all.

Others of my calling retreated from their stalls into cellars, and sat with their heads just above the pavement, looking very droll, and like the jacks in boxes that the children play with; but for myself I never did. I stuck to my stall whenever I worked; and fixed a big red umbrella, if it rained, above my head, and defied the winds and all forces of the elements.

Having braved in my younger manhood the icy winters of old German cities far northward, I was not afraid of the blasts that come over the Alps and Apennines and make one shiver, as they used to make Cato do, no doubt, despite all his philosophy; whistling up under his toga, and sporting with his dignity.

I confess I like to think of Cato shivering in the winter wind. I have no love for him, nor honour, nor any veneration.

Surely never more curiously than in Cato were mediocrity and narrow-mindedness deified and immortalized; always arrayed with persistent obstinacy against innovation of any kind; a foe to all genius and all elegance; so brutal to his slaves that one of them hanged himself out of sheer fear of his displeasure; so rapacious of their labour, that, whilst counselling festivals should be religiously kept in the letter and the plough laid aside, he recommends that slaves shall be meanwhile put to all *other* kind of work; furious against all immorality, whilst considering chastity in marriage in nowise binding on the husband; never rising to a higher view of moral excellence than lies in the range of a strict police discipline, and never imagining a loftier honour than lies locked in the merchant's ledger; considering every man of versatile powers and graceful accomplishments fit only for a harlequin, and despising a poet as only level with a woman or a mountebank; in old age, changing from the sturdy farmer and the plebeian soldier of the Hannibalic, Punic, and Macedonian wars, into the likeness of a prude, and something more disgusting than a prude, and spending long hours of in-

spection before the washing, swaddling, and nursing of his children:—how has he ever come to be revered by posterity?

Such qualities as he possessed of independence, integrity, and a very illiberal patriotism, never rose to any grandeur, and cannot redeem the egotism, the self-sufficiency, and the narrowness of the rest of his character, and, indeed, were virtues general in almost every citizen of his time. He had all the faults, and no more than the excellencies of any sturdy, prejudiced, opinionated, commonplace character, who represents the householder; and yet Marcus Porcius Cato, who refused a holiday to his labour-worn creatures by a miserable quibble, and who thought that to die worth more gold than you inherited 'showed a divine spirit,' has come to be named in the same breath with Socrates and Plato, and Marcus Aurelius—oh, triumph sublime of the Mediocrities!

When the full winter was come, very great and grand people, foreigners, princes, and the like, came up constantly, as I say, to the famous studio on the Sabine hill; for Maryx was illustrious, and his name known wherever anything of Art was in any way comprehended, and he might have dined had he chosen at any sovereign's table in Europe. He but seldom saw his great guests amongst his marbles; when obliged to do so, he received them with that noble, frank courtesy, which he showed alike to the highest and the lowest. "He looks like Pergolesi's shepherd king," said a woman once, and indeed it was not ill said, for he had something unworldly and untameable, yet majestic and royal, in all his air and bearing.

Giojà, as I say, too, was never seen by all these people, for his house had many chambers, and the one set apart for her work, where the Apollo Citharœdus was, he never allowed to be invaded. At entertainments, which he occasionally gave—for, though of extreme simplicity, almost austerity, in his own habits, he lived with the magnificence of a great artist in his conduct to others,—he would have had her be present, and often pressed her to be so; but she resisted, and begged to be left alone, studying under the old bronze lamp that burned before Hermès in my room on the river.

"She is quite right, and besides, she is so young," said Maryx, and ceased to think of it.

His mother never alluded again to any thought of love or marriage about the girl. She grew used to seeing Giojà come and go across the court, with the sun on the golden bronze of her hair, and accepted her presence there with the half stupid,

half puzzled feeling with which the once shrewd but now clouded mind of the old peasant accepted all the strange things around her, rebellious, yet resigned.

"Only you have made a clay image of her—that is bad," she said, one day, seeing a cast that he had made, and recognising in it the straight delicate limbs and the classic face that she saw every morning come up through the aloes and the myrtle on to the terrace steps.

"That is bad," she would say. "Only the Holy Mother should be worshipped like that; and to put a maiden amongst your false gods and light women—that is not well either."

Maryx would smile.

He, like his mother, grew used to seeing the tall slender form of the maiden pass up through his trees and his flowers into that beautiful house of his, which, without her now, would have seemed too cold and too silent; even as I at sunset grew used to seeing her come across the bridge to dip her hands in the fountain water, and lean over my board, and tell me what progress she had made that day, and what her master had said to her, or had bidden her do.

At times she would pass the evening on the Golden Hill, but it was always when he was alone and unoccupied, and at such times she would spin to please his mother, or weave some piece of tapestry, on which she imitated flowers she had gathered and set in water near her, or draw in black and white, whilst Maryx, who had vast stores of the most miscellaneous learning, and the most capacious memory in the world, illustrated his own theories of art, with passages from the most recondite of the classic writers, and manuscripts of the Vatican, and the libraries of old Italian cities, and of Paris, that scarcely any eyes but his own had ever been at the pains to decipher.

Ah, happy nights and innocent, in the quiet vaulted chamber, sweet with the scent of burning pines, and spacious as the hall of Alcinous, with the light of the hearth spreading broad and bright where the old dark figure of the woman sat and span, and the girl sped the swift shuttle, as Athene taught the Phæacian maids to do, and the deep soft tones of Maryx filled the silence with the sonorous sounds of Greek and Latin prose; —ah, happy nights and innocent! They should have had more abiding spell to bind, more lasting power to endear!—but such are the ways of fate, and life is as the maze of Lars Porsenna's tomb, whereof no man knows the clue or holds the plan.

Maryx, in these winter months, made her in marble, as Nausicaa.

Nausicaa, as she had gone down through the orchards and the olive gardens to the sea, holding the golden cruse of oil in one hand, with her feet bare, so that she might wade in the waves, and in her eyes the great soft wonder that must have come there when Odysseus awoke. Nothing more delicately, seriously beautiful had ever come from his chisel, and nothing more purely Greek.

How one wishes that they had told us the fate of Nausicaa: when she leaned against the pillar, and bade her farewell to the great wanderer, we know her heart was heavy: never again could she play by the shore glad-hearted with her maidens; when she had passed that day out, between the silver dogs of Hephæstus, through the west wind, and the pomegranate blossoms, to the sea, she had left her happy youth behind her.

So much we feel sure, but we would fain know more. Were it a modern poem, how it would be amplified; how much we should hear of her conflict of silence and sorrow; no modern would have the coldness to leave her there, leaning against the column in Alcinous' hall, and never add a word of her fate!

But that is our weakness, we cannot "break off the laurel bough," shortly and sharply, unburnt, as they did of old.

Did she live to be the mother of a line of kings? I like better to think that she never forgot the stranger who passed away to Ithaca, thinking never of her, but only—when he did look back—of the burning daughters of Atlas and of Helios, weaving songs and charms in their magical isles for the shame and the souls of men.

For me, I always wish, sinfully perhaps, to strangle Penelope in her own web, and wed Ulysses to the sweet Phæacian maid.

This Nausicaa, which Maryx imagined, was exceedingly fair.

It had the peculiar charm of Giojà's own look; that look which had all the mysterious depth of a young goddess's, and the clear innocence of a child's. It was Nausicaa going to the sea, not come from it. Giojà also had not as yet seen what slept on an untouched shore to make her sorrow.

She was happy, but she was happy with her mind, not with her heart. In her simplicity of habits and her seriousness of thought, she resembled rather a beautiful Greek youth than a girl of her own time. She was so ignorant of her own power; she was so serenely unconscious that when she threw back the sleeve from her arm to work the better the action might quicken the pulse of a man into passion, that she scarcely seemed mortal to me, used to the ardent and tender women of my city. Her

poor foolish father, who had given up so weakly to his fate, and sat down under his burden by the Ligurian waves, had had, at the least, wisdom to educate her into that love of the world's past, and that absorption into the arts, which are the surest shield against the perils of youth. Athênê Erganê has a surer shield than even Athênê Promachos.

"You admire him; you like him? he is kind to you?" I asked her at the close of her first week's study on the Golden Hill.

"He teaches me!—he will make me an artist too!" she answered me in surprise.

That was all she thought of or needed. Had he been the ugliest dwarf in all creation, Maryx would have been none the less a deity to her. She grew as the time went by into an adoration of him, but it was only with such a sentiment as that wherewith she adored the memory of the son of Charmidas, the idea of the strength of Lysippus.

Maryx was a great artist; he was her master.

She sighed for his smile; she feared his frown: she hung with reverence on all his words. But it was only because he was to her Art incarnate. She never knew all that she owed to him. For he would never let me tell her, and swift as she was to see an error in a line, an imperfection in a fancy, things of daily life escaped her. She took what she found without thinking about it.

Her body wanted so little, and her mind demanded so much. If you had fed her mind and delighted it, she would have let you beat her, or starve her, and would not have complained.

"If she had not happily been dedicated to Apollo and Athene, she would have seen visions and died in a convent, like Teresa of Spain," said Maryx of her one day. "She is like those flowers which hang by a thread and live on the sun."

I thought that he hardly read her aright.

She had more strength than Teresa of Spain, and the storm would feed her, I thought, scarcely less than the sun. But, like Santa Teresa, she saw immortals come to her, and she had little to do with the human creatures about her. Scarcely enough to make her human. It hurt her more to see a mutilated marble, than to see a woman worn with disease and pain. Her angel was Apollo. For such defiance of the common fate there is always an avenging destiny.

What did Maryx feel to this flower?

I did not know; it seemed to me he scarcely knew himself. He thought much more at first of her genius than of himself.

"No woman ever did any good thing in marble, and she is a girl," he would say. "Yet——"

Yet he gave much time and thought to her instruction, and found in her a power of imagery and a mastery of execution which he allowed to be wonderful, her youth and her age both considered.

His mother's suggestion seemed to have passed by him unheeded, and to be forgotten. He treated her as he would have treated a youth in whose talent and fate he had interest—nothing more.

"Who would talk of love to her?" he said once, a little roughly. "She would understand you no more than my Nausicaa yonder!

"She is not like Nausicaa at all," he added. "Nausicaa dreamed of love, and of the nuptial joys: she never does. I think men scarcely exist for her. She has no thought of me, for instance, save as of some abstract incarnation of her art, that leads her in its right ways, and so is worth regarding."

"Well, would you change that? Is it not a blessing for her?"

"No, I would not change it," he answered thoughtfully. "It has a great charm—to see those clear deep eyes of hers look so far out beyond oneself, and all about one. But it will change, I suppose, some day. No one remains for ever beyond the common fate of human lives. And just in proportion to the previous strength is the force of the fall from it. It would be better for her if she were like Nausicaa, playing ball, and thinking of the bridal clothes."

"Alas, alas! who would marry her?" said I, with all a Roman's prejudice.

"Any one who loved her, no doubt," said Maryx, judging the minds of men by the greatness of his own.

Meanwhile of such things Giojà had no thought. At times almost I grew superstitious, and thought she was hardly human; she was so indifferent to everything outside the pale of art, and so untouched by all that usually touches girls: she never seemed to see the children laughing in her path, the lovers in the twilight of the trees, the strings of pearl and coral in the artificers' windows, the baby at its mother's breast, the birds on their spring nests.

What she cared for was to stand in the damp moss-grown niches of the Vatican with the Mercury and Apollo, and to wander through the great stone galleries of the Capitol, until

one really began to think she was some Vestal buried alive, and kept by some freak of nature fresh and fair in the bosom of mother earth, and released and awakened, but feeling astray in the sunlight, and bewildered to find so much of Rome remaining, yet so much destroyed.

One day we passed our lovely Sta. Maria in Trastevere, when a marriage party were coming out from the doors. They were people of the labouring class, but the girl was very graceful, and the man was bold and handsome, and both looked happy, with that perfect happiness which has "the life of the rose," but, unlike the rose, fades, not to bloom again with the next summer.

They were coming out, and we stepped back to give them room.

"What are they doing?" she asked me.

"They have been to the priest to be married," said I. "I know them—they will be very poor. He is a fruitseller. They will live in one room under the street. They will never eat meat. They will have many troubles. But for all that they will be happy. They love one another. They will run out in the sun, and laugh, and sing, and play with their children, and go to the theatre when they can——"

"And when he does not love her any more?" asked Giojà.

I was silent. It took my breath away. What should she know about men's faithlessness?

"Why should he cease to care for her?" I stammered. "She is a good girl, and young and so pretty."

"I do not know. In all the old tales one or the other changes," she said, gravely. "I suppose it is always so. There was a woman lived near us on the shore. She had grown quite old. But when she had been young she had been handsome, and a man loved her very much. She was then at Naples, and after a time he grew jealous, and he drew his knife, and gashed her all across the eyes and forehead, so that she should never be beautiful for any one any more, but hideous—which she was. And after that, though he came to know that she had always deserved good of him, and never ill, he deserted her, and went to other women, and she fell into great misery; and when she lived upon our shore she was glad to boil the seaweed and the jellyfish to make a little food. But she told me her story, and though she was disfigured, and one of her eyes was blinded, she said she would not have had it otherwise. 'My sight is dark,' she said, 'and in the wound he made you can lay two fingers still, and it still aches and throbs when the nights are cold; but

I am glad he hurt me so—it tells me how he loved me once. When I think I must be dreaming, and that I never could have been lovely and beloved, then I put my hand up to the great cruel wound, and I know it was true, and I feel his kisses again. He left me, yes—he was a man, and I was a woman—but he loved me once. Else he would not have hurt me.' That was what she said. She was old, and half blind, and wretched. But she had not forgotten."

I shivered a little as I heard. There was a sound in her voice of sympathy with that poor wounded soul which frightened me for her.

"And you understand her?" I said. "Faith to the faithless? Is that well?"

"I think I understand it," she said slowly. "And I suppose if she had loved him once, whether he ceased to love her or not, that could not make any difference. But it must be terrible. Why do people love at all?"

"It is nature," I said feebly.

"Nature is cruel," said the girl.

And from that I could not dissent, seeing that the only motive power and the sole keynote of all creation is cruelty in some form or another.

The marriage party by this time were well away down the street, their voices carolling a chorus, and the bright colours of their costumes glancing in the sun. She looked after them.

"What will she do when he does not love her any longer?" she said, with that first touch of human pity that I have ever known in her.

"When he does not—if he do not—I dare say she will stab him; she is a Trasteverina. If not, she will weep a little, and play with her babies, and get over it; most women do so."

A supreme disdain came on the thoughtful calmness of her face. "Women are poor creatures, then," she said, and moved on past the Monastery of St. Anna, whose true saint is Vittoria Colonna.

As a man I could not assent to her; as a philosopher I could not dissent.

But I saw that Maryx and I both had been wrong in our belief, and that she had indeed thought of love and of its obligations, only perhaps too much; at any rate she had learned a belief in Love's great canon: better throbbing wounds by which to mark remembered kisses after death, than peace and solitude without a sign.

"Only, alas!" I groaned to myself, as I stumbled on in her steps, "they were right that day in the Borghese Gallery: it is so seldom Eros; it is so often Apâte and Philotès."

But then of these mock gods she knew nothing.

CHAPTER XI.

With spring the city thinned, and the pleasure folks went on their ways, and never stayed to see the Sabine mountains, and all the rest, grow like one soft sea of green with the young grass, and the Campagna a very ocean of blossoming flowers, with the great cattle knee-deep in it, and the mounted shepherds riding through a glory of waving colour.

With spring Maryx usually went to his own land, but this year he did not stir, nor speak of leaving Rome. The Nausicaa went to sustain his great name, and the Nero; but he himself remained.

With the sweet glad spring weather, when one could lie and laugh all day on the turf of the Pamfili Doria woodlands, and groups stood chatting and love-making about the great cool fountains half the radiant night, he and she and I went on many a ramble together.

Together we feasted on porcupine in Ariosto's tavern, and traced the ways of Tullia's blood-stained chariot; together we bowed our heads to ruined altars in the bowels of the earth, and saw the salterello danced under the spring-blossoming vines; together we pulled the anemones under the old oaks of Galba's gardens, and traced the fancied sites of vanished temples under crowding hovels or frowning convent-walls; together we found our roads, by Strabo and Suetonius and Dion Cassius, through twisting lanes and heaps of rubble, and talked of buried cities that lay beneath us as we sat on the grassy mounds in the silent country, with the oxen coming to us between the high tufa banks, and the caper flowers covering the fallen stones of nameless tombs.

"Are you happy now?" I asked of Giojà one day. She was silent a moment, then answered:

"I am content."

The strong instinctive veracity in her weighed the measure of her days, and gave them their right name. She was content.

her life was full of the sweetness and strength of the arts, and of the peace of noble occupation and endeavour. But some true instinct in her taught her that this is peace, but is not more than peace. Happiness comes but from the beating of one heart upon another.

She was Nausicaa on her path through the orchards, in the cool of the early morning, to the sea, with all the day to come.

Amongst our pilgrimages we went at times to Daïla: the estate of Hilarion. The site of it had once been a Sabine town, and in the vineyards were the foundations of a villa that, as I have said, according to tradition, had belonged to the gay sad author of the Satyricon, and coins found in the soil, and letters cut in the leaden water-pipes, seemed to confirm this supposition of antiquaries, which especially pleased its present owner, since between Petronius and Hilarion there was that certain sympathy which makes two thousand years seem but a moment.

Later it must have belonged to Julia Domna, or some other of the Syrian empresses, or some great creature of their household, for there were all the symbols, and many of the deities, of the Eastern creeds found in those excavations which for years Hilarion had had made there. The present villa there, which he had purchased, was one of the sixteenth century, and magnificent enough, with its vast halls painted by Giulio Romano and his scholars, with clouds of angels and throngs of heroes on the vaults and domes; and, without, the high clipped arbutus hedges, the stone terraces, the fishponds with their marble stairs and moss-grown nereids of an artificial age, and beyond these again the wide-spreading green glades, dusky with the ilex oak, and the cedar, and the cork tree, and the stone pine, through whose stately trunks one saw the silver gleam of the distant sea of Æneas, and the dark shadows of the Pontine marshes, and the bold blue mountains of the "people of the lance," and the whiteness of snowy peaks that rose against the azure of the skies.

Giojà had gone but seldom there, for it was some twelve or fourteen miles out towards the north-west; but no place had so great a fascination for her, except the heart of Rome itself.

The mere name of Hilarion had a charm for her ear, and often in the studio of Maryx she would stand and look up to the face of his bust, and that of the Apollo Cytharædus, which was his also; and whenever we spoke of him, as indeed we did often, she would listen with that look in her eyes which came into them for the marbles, and the fountains, and the dear dead gods.

"When will he come back?" she asked me often; and that

I never could tell her, for the moods of Hilarion were as variable as the winds that blew over Rome.

But he almost seemed to be at Daïla: there was his inkstand open in the library; there was his velvet coat thrown across a chair; there was his Martial lying open, with a dead rose in it to keep the place; there were his mares neighing in the stable; there were his flowers blossoming under the terraces; there were his labourers labouring for him amongst the buried marbles under the vines; and there was the tomb of the dog he had killed in a fit of petulance, kept with a care that the shades of Augustus and of Livia might have envied.

Hilarion absent, became at Daïla a living reality to this girl, to whom Apollo and Virgil, and Adonis and Valeria, and all the gods and all the mortals of the old Latin land were in a manner nearer than we who gave her her daily bread and touched her hand.

For me I only wished that he might for ever remain to her thus, like a Hellenic myth, looming larger and lovelier than life through the golden haze of mystical imaginations. For the sight of Hilarion was not less cruel to woman than was his soft, bitter, amorous verse.

When the very great heats of the midsummer came, Maryx took me aside one day.

"She is well now, but she will not be well much longer, if she stay in the drought of July," he said to me. "Rome does not hurt you and me, but a creature as young as that, and a girl —it is different. Listen to what I want you to do. It is an innocent subterfuge, and I see no other way."

Then he told me of a farm of his own—for he had purchased largely in and about the city, being now a rich man—which was close to Frascati, on those breezier heights, where health may be better kept than down in the ways of the town itself; and he told me that I was to go thither for the two perilous months, speaking of it as needful for my health, and persuade her by any means I could to accompany me, taking care not to speak of him in connection with it. For himself, he intended to stay on the Golden Hill.

"I have too much work in hand to leave," he said; but the blood came into the clear olive skin of his cheeks as he spoke, and I thought my own thoughts, and was glad.

"You must not let her dream the place is mine," he said, a little later. "She is so proud, and it would pain her;—and, indeed, what obligation to me is there? None at all."

I promised compliance; but when I sought to persuade her I found the task quite beyond my powers.

"I will not leave Rome," she said, and was resolute.

"Rome will never hurt me," she said. "It would hurt me much more to leave it. This room is high and cool, and you know this part of the river is healthy, even though the floods come. I could not go out of Rome, and besides, I am learning so much; and he has promised to let me touch the clay next month."

And to be moved she was not, and so I stayed as I had stayed for many a year, stitching at my stall in the summer heat, with the big melons and the bursting honey-filled figs all agape at the street corners, and the lads and lasses coming over the bridge at midnight, with trailing rose-boughs, and the lilies of Mary in their hands, twanging their lutes and laughing.

As it happened, mercifully, the summer was unusually cool, and she did not suffer from it in any way, and worked arduously in the studio on the Mons Aureus, and gained from her great master much of his technical skill, and much of his catholic and noble views of art, and its obligations.

Maryx, with all his passion of reverence for the art of the past, had a perception of the excellencies and of the failures of his own generation truer than that which is given to most men. He did not overrate the present age of the world, but neither did he deride it. It moved him rather to sympathy and compassion than to either of those two extremes of vanity and of scorn, into one of whose opposite camps most of us are driven in too great heat and violence.

Hilarion, who had written much to emasculate it, spent all the brilliancy of his brain in heaping endless contumely upon his own generation; Maryx, who had done much to enrich it, regarded it with affection and regret, as a man may do his country when its ways are uneven and its future is dark.

"We are the sons of our time," he would say. "It is not for us to slay our mother. Let us cover her dishonour if we see it, lest we provoke the Erinyes."

And he held that our own age was not so much debased as it was despairing; not so often base as it was weary.

"Surely," he said one day, in those moments of eloquence which were frequent with him, for he had a trick of natural eloquence when with those for whom he had a liking, and who liked to listen to him, "surely the world, made up of human beings as it is, is only like one human being in his passage

through life. To youth belong ineffable graces all its own, and charms never to be counterfeited when youth has passed away hope and faith and the freshness of unbroken illusions are with it; it has the bloom as of the untouched fruit, the charm as of the half-opened flower: it is rich in the treasures of its untried years, and strong in the insolence of its beauty and its strength; it is without suspicion and without fear; but, also, it is without sympathy: it is glorious as the glory of the morning, but he who seeks its pity finds it hard, from pure joyousness of soul, and ignorance of sorrow: its selfishness is only ignorance, but it is selfish: it says to every passing hour, 'thou art fair,' why should it look elsewhere? When youth is gone, the character that has gained from living any profit will have softened, and mellowed, under the suns and storms of many days; with wide experience it will have wide toleration and comprehension; its sympathies will be unfailing, because it will be aware that 'to understand is to pardon,' since for all evil there is excuse, could all influences, and motives, and accidents of circumstance be traced: its own past lies behind it, a land for ever lost, and its onward path is dark: it looks back so often because it has not heart to look forward, since all it sees is death: many are the graves of its desires and of its friends: it is full of pity for all things that breathe, because it has learned that nearly every breath is pain: there is nothing in which it can have much belief, but there is little to which it can refuse compassion, since all creation suffers: the unutterable sadness and mystery of all forms of life oppress it, and it hears the children and the lovers say 'for ever,' knowing itself too well that the mortal's 'for ever' is but the gnat's day upon a ray of sun and breath of vapour.

"As thus with the individual character of man, so it is with the character of the world, and of those arts in which the voice of the world's soul speaks.

"Fearlessness, loveliness, and force characterized all that it did, and all that it sang of in an earlier time: tenderness and pity are the excellencies of all the best that it produces now. In the first ages all achievement and inspiration were fresh as the dews of dawn, and he who struck the lyre had no fear that his hymns were but weak echoes of a stronger sound. All was new, all was spontaneous. Now all this is changed. We feel that our production can hardly ever be more than repetition. We are, like the priests and the people of Lyonesse, powerless to raise the magic sword wielded by stronger hands than ours; and we

have no child Arthur amongst us, or if we have we deny and put him aside, and the sword lies unlifted.

"But if we have lost the force and the freshness of an earlier day, we have gained something else not wholly to be despised.

"I think that whilst we have, perhaps, lost dignity, and certainly have lost concentration, our sight is more extended, our range of feeling more varied, our understanding of pain and of joy more acute.

"The pathos and mirth of the Knight of Mancha and the passions of Juliet and Francesca are our own; the vast comprehension of Shakespeare and the microscopic analysis of Balzac are purely modern; what depths of complex emotion and passion divide Heloise from Helen, or Imogene from Antigone, and sever Shelley from Sophocles, and Faust from Paris!

"This world of our own immediate day is weak and weary, because it is no longer young; yet it possesses one noble attribute—it has an acute and almost universal sympathy, which does indeed often degenerate into a false and illogical sentiment, yet serves to redeem an age of egotism. We have escaped both the gem-like hardness of the Pagan, and the narrowing selfishness of the Christian and the Israelite. We are sick for the woe of creation, and we wonder why such woe is ours, and why it is entailed on the innocent dumb beasts, that perish in millions for us, unpitied, day and night. Rome had no altar to Pity: it is the one god that we own. When that pity in us for all things is perfected, perhaps we shall have reached a religion of sympathy that will be purer than any religion the world has yet seen, and more productive. 'Save my country!' cried the Pagan to his deities. 'Save my soul!' cries the Christian at his altars. We, who are without a god, murmur to the great unknown forces of Nature: 'Let me save others some little portion of this pain entailed on all simple and guileless things, that are forced to live, without any fault of their own at their birth, or any will of their own in their begetting.'"

When he would speak thus, or in similar moods on similar themes, with that natural power of utterance which gave him a greater sway over the minds of students than any one had possessed since Canova, she would listen to him with silent reverence and grave delight.

All his temper was akin to hers, and no thought of his was alien to her mind.

Yet he was quite right: as a man, she never thought of him;

he was her master, and so her ruler; an artist, and so of her kindred; but no more.

And, indeed, he did not seek to be more.

Nothing could be purer, simpler, and more utterly free from any kind of passion than the patience with which he taught her, and the goodness with which he befriended her. His care of her was so continual, but so unobtrusive, that perhaps for that very reason she noticed it but little.

Maryx had known the stormy passions of an ardent and imaginative manhood, but of late years he had been little moved by women; he had grown indifferent to them. There was nothing in his conduct, or in his manner to her, which could indicate that that indifference was altered. Except that he was more gentle, he treated her as he had often treated before her young lads in whose poverty and talent he had seen the image of his own lonely youth.

But, myself, I noticed that he did not go out of Rome this year scarcely for a day; and I noticed the infinitely caressing softness that came into his lustrous eyes whenever she drew near; and I hoped—hoped—that she might lay her young head for ever on that brave heart of his, and lose her dreams of greatness in the accomplished greatness of his own.

For his mother was right, the marble was too cold for the soft-beating bosom of a girl to rest on long; and the Daphne of Borghese was right also—when the laurel grows out of the breast of a woman, it hurts!

So, peacefully, the summer came and waned and merged in autumn; and September was upon me ere I knew it, and all the little children were growing round-eyed, and eager, to think of the near-coming pleasure of running out into the vineyards, amongst the tombs and the temples and the buried cities, and dancing before the big grape waggons down the old tracks across the Campagna, where once the Via Triumphalis was.

For these things Giojà did not care: she cared if amongst the vines you found the mask of a muse or the head of a satyr; she cared if putting the grass aside you found the marks where an altar had smoked, or the broken pottery that told of an old forgotten city.

One would have been glad for her to be more quickly touched by simple joys, more girlishly alive to natural mirth and pleasure. But the solitude in which all her years had been passed on that silent shore, where the myrtles grow over the buried kingdoms, and the kings' sepulchres shelter the sheep and the goats by the

side of the blue sea that once bore the vessels of Æneas and the galleys of Scipio—this solitude, I say, and the manner of her rearing in it, had left their impress on her too deeply engraven ever to be changed.

"I wish I could be happy—just once—for one little day!" she said, wistfully, that summer, after watching silently some girls dancing the salterello with their lovers, under the vine-hung terrace of a little winehouse in the chestnut woods of Castel Gandolfo.

Maryx, standing by her, shrank a little, as if stung by some sudden pain.

"We do all we can," he said; and was silent. And his eyes were as wistful as hers.

She turned to him repentantly.

"Oh, do not think me thankless. I did not mean that; I have all I could wish, so much more than ever I could have hoped for; only—to be light of heart, and to laugh like that, must be so beautiful, just for once. What makes them so happy?"

"Ask them," said Maryx.

She went up to one of the girls, a brown, bright, handsome maiden, with a necklet of pearls heaving on her gay and honest breast.

"Why are you so happy?" she asked, her own deep serious eyes questioning the girl's gravely and wishfully.

The Roman maiden laughed, showing all her white teeth.

"How can I tell? I am glad to dance, and I have got my new pearls, and I shall marry Rufino at the Nativity."

"You see," said Maryx, "these are the fountain springs of all the world's happiness: heedlessness, possession, and—love!"

"I do not understand," said Giojà, with a disappointed shadow on her face.

It was quite true. She understood the passion for the dance and for the pearls as much and as little as she understood the love. She had been able to comprehend the misery of the woman on the Maremma shore, but she could not comprehend the gleesome gladness of the betrothed dancer.

"I am not like others, I see," she said, sadly, and with a sense of something lacking in her that she could not help.

Maryx's brown eyes dwelt on her tenderly.

"Dear, you are like Ariadnê; you have the clue and the sword; Athene keeps you. No mortal has every gift. Lightness and laughter you must miss sometimes. Yes;—but love is yours, and art."

"There is no one to love me now that my father is dead," she said, with her calm young face unchanged.

For she did not know that love was looking on her from his eyes.

Maryx walked onward, under the green shadow of the chestnuts and the oaks.

"Do not think of those old myths too much," he said; "and think more of the loveliness of the earth, which outlasts all stories and all faiths. Look at that soft green light yonder, and the clouds of pale faint gold, and the intense deep blue above our heads. Sometimes I almost think we artists are all madmen, and our Athene's casque no better than a cap and bells; for what can the very greatest that any art can ever achieve look beside one single fleeting moment of the million sunsets that come and go with scarcely any eyes upraised to watch them? The happiness of the world may not be very great, my dear; but I fear the thanklessness of the world is very great indeed."

And the sweet melodious depth of his voice sounded to me like the Lenten music of the Sistine chaunts, as we walked through the Galleria, under the mighty forest boughs.

The thanklessness of the world was great! Would she be thankless?

We passed silently through those noble woodland glades which lead to Nemi or Aricia, as you please; and whence you come, if you will, into a portion of the Appian Way, and find the sheep nibbling amongst the scattered marbles:

"While to ocean descending,
Sank o'er the yellow dark plain slowly the yellow broad sun,"

we roamed idly through them into the avenues of the Cesarini woods. The nightingales were beginning to sing again, though the season of their song was almost over; goldfinches were revelling and rifling amongst the red fruit of the many wild cherry-trees; the sky was of the hue of rose-leaves, and seemed to blush through the bronze-and-black boughs of the hoary cedars; now and then a laden mule went by us, or a peasant with a bundle of dead branches; it was so still we could hear the faint, hollow sound of a woodpecker striking at some one of the great trunks.

"There is Picus," said Maryx. "What a strange thing is Tradition! Perhaps it was in this very forest that Circe, gathering her herbs, saw the bold friend of Mars on his fiery courser,

and tried to bewitch him, and, failing, metamorphosed him so. What, I wonder, ever first wedded that story to the woodpecker? Ovid did not invent, he related. And then there is Pilumnus, who was the first to make cheese, and became the god of the bakers and of infants in swaddling clothes, and he is now the pewit or the hoopoe, which you like. How droll and how unreasonable, and how charming it all is! And yet, they say, the ancients had no feeling for Nature, when there was not a bush, or a bird, or a portent of the sky, that had not for them its symbol or story!"

Giojà looked with soft, serious eyes through the gloom for the woodpecker: to her all the stories were more than half real.

"Canens searched for him six days and six nights," she said, very low, as if to herself, "and then she died of grief by the Tiber, you know; perhaps the little brown bird was close beside her all the time and saw her die and could not speak——"

"Yes," said Maryx shortly, with a strange tone in his voice, "that is the fate of love very often; to be unable to say—'I am here!' Be sure though that Circe was near also, and laughing."

"Why did the gods let such a thing as Circe be, that is what I do not understand——"

"My dear, Circe is stronger than all the gods; and what she symbolizes is so too, now as then. Perhaps, after all, however, she could only make beasts of those who had the beast in them; passion can do no more. It is the touchstone of character."

He spoke rather to himself than to her.

I fell thinking as I walked behind him of Jacopone of Umbria, who wrote the Stabat Mater hymn; he was a great master of jurisprudence, and was already growing very famous, when the woman he loved died suddenly, and they found a hair-shirt under her gay festal dress—for she fell dead at a carnival ball. He turned to Christ, and joined the Franciscans. They found him weeping one day and asked him wherefore. He said, "I weep because love goes about unloved."

No doubt, when he so answered, he was thinking of the unknown sin for which that fair wife by whom his own heart had been broken had done that secret penance; no doubt he was thinking, "Lo! the whole of my life I gave, and it was wasted like water spilled upon the ground."

There is no greater bitterness.

"When I was here last," said Maryx, "I was with Hilarion. Corôt was with us, and other great men too. There was just

such a sunset as this. Corôt, who was very silent that day, sat down and sketched it for a time; then he shut up his book in sheer despair. Yet landscape painters are happy, I think; they have a future; there is much to be done that has never been done in their art. Perhaps the time will come too, when, the earth having been all built over with brick, and the skies all blackened with furnaces, and the lands all over peopled to the very edge of the farthest shores, the wretched crowds will look at one of our landscapes, trying to understand, as we look at pictures on the Etruscan tombs: and they will say, 'Was the world ever like that?—was there ever space to breathe, and green leaves?' Sometimes I fancy the end of our world will come so; the greed of gold and the innumerable multitudes making an awful famine, a universal famine, of the body and of the soul; in which every creature will perish as in the eternal Arctic night and reign of ice that men of science predict for the future of the earth. Look, there is Monte Cavo, where Juno was throned to see the combat. It is more beautiful when there is snow upon its height, and you see the snow through the budding branches of March or April. But it is beautiful always."

We walked on till the sun sank out of sight, and left only the reflection of its light upon the sky made rosy red—men of science tell us why, with learned exposition. The Greeks said that the tired coursers of the sun, weary with climbing the great passage of the sky, were sinking to their rest; that fancy pleases me more, being a foolish man, to whom the glories and the mysteries of the air are so wonderful and sacred that it hurts me to hear them glibly explained away with chatter of absorption and refraction, and the rest, by pert-tongued mortals.

We walked onward and downward, until many miles away we saw a great dome afar off, rising against the faint rose-leaf flush of the skies, which deepened towards the horizon into the ruddier red as of the pomegranate flower.

"Why does St. Peter's always move us so?" said Maryx, shading his eyes with his hand. "It moves us more even than the dome of Agrippa, and seems more Roman—which is absurd. Yet, when you are within it, glorious though it is, it is only the heaven of John of Patmos; a Semitic Eden of gold and jewels. When men prefigured their heaven in the asphodel meadows of Elysium and the fields of Leuke, their white temples shone against the sun; laurels and myrtles grew against their steps; their roofs were open to the changing sky, to the wheeling

swallows, to the falling rain; their altar offerings were the fruits of the earth, the spoils of harvest, and the gifts of spring."

"And yet there are people so daft," I murmured, "as to argue that the Greek and Latin temples were only lighted by the portico!"

"Dear Crispin," said Maryx, "there are people who argue that the Pantheon was once closed in by the bronze pigna in the Vatican gardens. I dare say it was,—in some early Pope's or some late Emperor's time!"

And indeed he was right: the Greek and the Roman wrote little of water and air, but they loved them both with healthy unconscious strength-giving instinct. It was when Ceres Mammosa fell, that the worship of nature fell with her: under the new creed men roofed in their temples with metal and timber, and feared to see the light; they lighted lamps, and shut out the sun when they prayed. When the Jew begot the Christian and the Christian governed the world, it was no longer in summer flowers and watered meadows, that Paradise found its fancied parallels. The passion of Solomon for baskets of gold and apples of silver, coloured the visions of the recluse on Patmos. The barbaric and coarse instincts of a predatory race lent their hues to the fancies of the Apocalypse.

It was the glowing web of the Syrian loom, the purple of Tyre, the gold of the Ark, the sapphire and ruby of Persia, the unforgotten spoils of ruined Babylon, that tinged the reveries of the early Christians as they slept in the dens of amphitheatres, waiting death, or wandered hungry and footsore over parching deserts, or crouched together trembling in the bowels of the earth.

The Jew, and by the Jew, his offspring, the Christian, shut his deity in a gold Tabernacle, builded in his altars with ceilings of cedar and cypress, and in his all-compensating Future, believed that he would tread streets studded with gems, and find eternal life in mansions blazing with precious stones. Sophocles and Shelley, Homer and Shakespeare, Virgil and Vincent de Paul, could have worshipped together in any one of the white temples on the myrtle-clad hills of old Rome, but in the New Jerusalem no poet could find a place; it is the heaven of a jeweller, or a money-lender; it has no greatness, no spirituality, no purity; it is tawdry and hard, like a blaze of ill-set paste gewgaws.

And this, the temper of the Jew, has tainted all religious art and architecture for almost a score of centuries.

It vulgarises the Transfiguration; it corrupts the Vita Nuova; it colours every Calvary, from that of Rubens to that of the street corner; it puts the hues of the rainbow into the cherubim wings of Botticelli, and clothes with tinsel the angel of Angelico. The Hebraic vulgarism is everywhere to be traced in Christian art, even in the highest; it is here perpetually about us in Christian Rome. It puts crosses on Asiatic obelisks; it puts paintings of saints on the Pantheon; it puts a statue of Peter on Trajan's Column. It has no sense of the fitness of things; and, worst of all, it has no remembrance of Nature.

Men call this tawdriness, Catholic; they do not seem to see that it is something much older—namely, Jewish. And the taint of it is in the glory of St. Peter's.

Only, as in the Gothic cathedral, the grim force of Odin and the sea-kings prevailed over it, so in St. Peter's, the vigour and majesty of early Rome, of pagan Rome, have come into it and given it a magnitude and magnificence that redeem it from the Semitic coarseness. There is the old Sabine and Latin strength in it; the old splendour of the Capitoline Jupiter; its temple, indeed, is still a palace, its altars, indeed, are still thrones, but all in it is so vast, so noble, almost so divine, that one forgets the golden roof is not the sun; one forgets the arch of lapis lazuli is not the dome of the open sky.

As he spoke of St. Peter's, the horses met us and took us back to Rome, by way of what was once the Via Triumphalis, whilst the soft flush faded out of the sky, and the stars began to quiver in the violet dusk which was not darkness.

"It has been a beautiful day," said Giojà, with a little sigh of repose and fatigue.

Maryx looked at her wistfully.

"To say the day has been beautiful—is not that to have been happy in it?"

She looked a little troubled and ashamed.

"One may be quite content—most thankful and content, and yet one may imagine——"

"Yes," said Maryx, understanding her; and he said no more.

It angered me. Why could she not be happy as any other girl or woman would have been?

I suppose, in truth, from her loneliness and her many dreams, she lived in a certain isolation and missed a certain warmth that the youth in her wanted without knowing well its want. No doubt in her it was natural and not to be helped. But on us it seemed hard.

I said so to Maryx, when we had left her, and were coming down the Via della Greca from seeing a sick student, who lived closed by to Sta. Maria in Cosmedin, where they show the skull of St. Valentine, wreathed with roses on his festal day;—he answered me with some sternness.

"What has she had in her short life to make her glad? Youth without pleasure is like a flower that comes up too early in the year and is frozen half-blown. Joy is unfamiliar to her; her name is a cruel irony. She is not to be blamed. When I was a lad yonder at the Villa Medici, I bought a bird from an old man in a cellar; it was a large hawk; I gave it a sunny place, good food, and even liberty; but the bird was always dull:—it was not my fault, nor was it the bird's; Nature had been cramped and thwarted, and took her vengeance. So it is here. When she thinks of Art alone she is happy. When she is awakened to the living world, she sees that she has missed much and is not quite like others. That is all."

"All? You are very generous. But will it ever be otherwise, do you think?"

Maryx smiled a little sadly.

"Who can say? Yes, I suppose so. Tired of seeing the dull filmy eyes of my hawk, I took it with me to Rocca de Pappa and let it fly one day; it went straight up into the air, and went away over the mountains; I never saw it again. I hope it escaped shot and snare. I had done what I could."

"You mean——?"

"Oh, nothing;—save that we must leave her quite free to shape her own course; and do not speak of generosity in me, it offends me. I do no more for her than I have done for twenty lads, and she is worthier than any one of them. I told you long ago, nothing that I can ever do for youth or for genius can repay my own debt—the debt to fortune and to France which began when I stood on the ilex terrace of the Academy and first saw Rome at my feet."

We were passing the portico with its stone mouth of Truth, and I was thinking of St. Augustine, who used the lion-throne inside: in the hot lustrous night, the water of the fountain basin glimmered freshly in the moonlight; in the lane we turned into was once the mighty altar of Fortuna Virilis; the silvery strong light shone on and about the Ionic columns, and the sculptures of the children, and the cattle of sacrifice.

Maryx uncovered his head to it all, as any Roman might have veiled his, two thousand years before.

"The goddess has been good to me," he said.

I felt chilly in the luminous path we trod under the rays of the bright full moon.

When men thank Fortune, mostly she turns from them and shuts her hand for ever.

What is she but a woman and blind?

His own face was grave, and lost its bold, frank brightness, as the moonbeams touched it; perhaps the same thought chilled him.

By the house of Pilate, he bade me good night, and went over the river by the Broken Bridge.

CHAPTER XII.

"There has been a new statue found at Daïla," said Maryx to me one fair sunny day in the autumn time, pausing before my stall, as I stitched at some boots of my roisterous neighbour the blacksmith, whose hammers were then ringing loudly enough to split one's ears at his open forge in the back of the Via Giulia.

"There has been a new statue found at Daïla, you must come and see it," said Maryx, with the sun in his handsome fearless eyes. "You must leave off your stitching, and come and see it. She will not care to go without you. No; it is not very ancient. About the time of Severus; I should say a copy of some fairer and earlier original. But it is very graceful——"

"A Venus?"

"No. A Feronia, I think, unquestionably. I dare say it will be called a Venus; everything is; it is the one name that ignorance has mastered; such is the power of beauty! Come up the hill to me to-morrow by the twentieth hour, and we will go together. It is a saint's day; you cannot work, unless you would lose the shoes of Padre Trillo. They will not put it indoors for a few days; there is no fear of rain, and it looks so well with the grapes and the olives about it. What a pity it is that marble discolours out of doors; it never looks so well as with a background of clouds and leaves. If the disputed *circumlitio* of the Greeks meant some manner of preserving statues from the influence of weather, as sometimes I used to think, the

loss of the method should be even more lamented than it is. Farewell. What a noise your friend the smith is making! one forgives him for the sake of Lysippus; it is one of the few trades that remain masterful and poetic."

Therewith he went over the bridge to his house, where Giojà was working in the quiet afternoon hours, modelling from the round in clay, or drawing from the antique in charcoal, with that breadth and greatness of treatment which Maryx infused into all that he did and all whom he taught.

"Avoid mere prettiness as you would the plague," he would say always. "A sculptor means a hewer of the rocks, not a modeller in sugar."

With the morrow he and she and I went up the old Flaminian Way, past the place of Sulla's tomb, out into the open country towards Soracte, behind those spirited little black horses of his which scorned the shoes of smiths, and would scramble like goats up the steepest paved lanes of hilly Rome; the horses, whose likeness one sees on the old friezes chiselled in the days when the horse was in a manner a free creature, and not the mere hapless piece of mechanism to which centuries of harness and stall-life have now reduced him.

The villa of Hilarion was vast as a king's palace, and almost as full of magnificence and profusion; it was always kept ready for him; there were many years when he never went near it; there were other years when he lived there all the four seasons through; in these painted marble halls, brilliant with Giulio Romano's bold colours, where the windows opened on the great avenues of cedar and evergreen oak, arching like cloisters on all sides to show some temple, lake, or statue, it was easy to believe that one was still in the era of magnificent Leo, or that luxurious Lucrezia might have been coming thither on her palfrey, or the Vatican court floating up Tiber in its barges with Bernardo Accolti rhyming his madrigals and sonnets to the rhythm of the oars.

The statue found that morning was left lying on the turf a little way from where it had been discovered, away from the house under the vines and olives, where the farms began and the gardens ended.

Oxen had ploughed above it for many a century, and many a soldier tramped to war, yet the marble was uninjured, save that the left arm was missing. It was lovely, and doubtless some copy of a Greek original adapted to a Latin divinity.

Maryx examined it long and lovingly, and decided that it

was of workmanship not later than the time of Adrian, and that it was a Feronia and not a Flora, as the master of the works had at first considered it to be, from the heavy wreath of various blossoms and leaves that crowned the head; and he gave us many a learned reason why it was the younger divinity that "loved garlands" rather than the greater goddess of all things that flowered and brought forth.

It was a Feronia, no doubt, said Maryx.

The Romans had loved Feronia, and had always given her beautiful festivals, not so licentious as the Floralia or the Liberalia, with which they had possessed much in common, however. She had been an Etrurian and Volscian deity, and was always dearer to the Sabine than to the Latin. She had had of old her chief temple at the foot of Soracte; Hannibal's soldiers had violated her shrine; before that she had been the cause of war between the Romans and the Sabines; she had been always a most beautiful though not supreme goddess, no doubt sprung from the same myth as Persephone at the beginning of time; she had had always most lovely attributes; wells and fountains had been consecrated to her; she had been in especial the deity of freed men; "benemeriti servi sedeant, surgent liberi" had been the inscription on her altars; her feasts had been all in the summer; they had used to invoke her with Apollo Soranus; she had clearly sprung from the Demeter legend as Libera did; what a pity that the freedmen had mostly been but panders and fawning sycophants, and bloated money-makers; the fancy was so fine; that gift of liberty in the temples of flowers:—so said Maryx, with much more that was worth hearing, as he sat on a block of tufa under an olive tree, beside the fair white Feronia who had been under the earth a thousand years if one, more likely two, and still was none the worse.

There was a great charm in hearing Maryx talk; his very voice was eloquence, and his fancy discursive, and his learning vast in all that belonged to the arts or to their history.

Giojà listened to him with a charmed delight. He was her beloved master.

The light fell through the silver leaves on to the marble in the grass: beyond the olives and the vines were the deeper green and purple shadows of great pine woods; through an opening there was the golden light which told that the city was shining in the sunset; behind us was sublime Soracte.

"How well it will be with them some day!" I thought, looking from the noble head of Maryx. lightened by the sunlight

that fell through the olive boughs, to the face of my Ariadnê, as it bloomed with youth and the freshness of air, and the warmth of high and tender thoughts. "How well it will be!" I thought, and was glad that I had meddled with that dread blind goddess who was throned of old upon Præneste.

There came a step through the olives, and over the grass to the place where we sat. Palès sprang from her rest in a delirium of rapture.

"Which is the found Feronia?" said Hilarion, as he looked from the statue to the girl. "Since when have your marbles breathed, Maryx? It is true, they always looked as though they did so."

We were too surprised to speak. No one had had any notice of his return. But then he never wrote to any living soul, and seldom was certain of his own moods one hour on another.

"Is there no welcome for me?" he said, with his eyes still resting wonderingly on Giojà.

She had risen, and was looking at him with a slow startled recollection and gladness waking on her face.

"You are the Apollo Citharœdus," she said, and paused in a little awe.

"I am a graceless singer of sad songs," said Hilarion, with a smile. "Have they been kind enough to make you think of me, though I was unknown? I said I should return when a fairer nymph than my marble Canens should be released from earth. I have kept my word, and I find Daïla thrice blessed."

Then he threw himself on the grass between her and the marble Feronia.

We began to tell him something both of her and of the statue.

"Tell me nothing," said Hilarion. "Let us cheat ourselves. We are living under Augustus. There is no shadow of the cross on the world yet. The Feronia will be raised on her altar to-morrow. We shall have the races with the rose-crowned boys, that symbolize the swiftness of time and the vainness of pleasure We do not believe in her nor in anything very much. The temper that comes with Cæsarism has made us mockers; but we keep the grace of the old faiths about us. Let us cheat ourselves—no one is happy except in delusion; and we will send for Tibullus to supper."

Giojà all the while was looking at him with grave soft eyes, still wondering. No woman ever looked at him once only; and to her he was the Apollo Citharœdus.

"The rose-crowned boys raced for Flora," said Maryx. "But if you choose to worship your Feronia with roses or anything else, who shall prevent you?—she is yours."

"No, she is yours. You found her, Maryx."

"Perhaps. But you own her."

"What! because she lies on my earth, and lay under it? That is no such title as yours, who could call as fair as she any day out of a block of stone. Take her, and set her in your atrium. It is not Feronia that I am disposed to envy you."

He looked towards Giojà, as he leaned near her on his elbow, full length on the grass.

Maryx understood.

"You mistake, my friend," he said, quickly, with a little frown. "There may be Divæ Virgines unpolluted with any adoration."

"Even of the little red dogs that were sacrificed in the Robigalia to avert the canicular blight?" said Hilarion, listlessly, still gazing at the face near him.

He too understood; but he did not believe.

"Perhaps those red dogs suggested for later legends the red mouse—who knows?"

"The red mouse has never entered where you look," said Maryx.

Giojà listened: she did not understand. She seldom asked questions. She studied, and she thought. "Few women can be silent and let God speak." She could be so. As her recompense she heard beautiful things; and missed many bad ones.

Hilarion laughed.

"Sculptors are always passionless," he said. "I wonder why there are no stories of them as there are of poets and of painters. They have no Laïs and no Laura—at least, for history. I suppose the marble chills you all."

"Do you call Laïs at the well, and Laura at the mass, passion?" said Maryx, with a little contempt.

"There are few things in tradition prettier than the meeting of Apelles and Laïs upon Akrokorinth," said Hilarion, not heeding. "I wonder no artist has made it his subject. But people are always confounding her with the too famous or infamous Laïs of Alkibiades, which is a pity. Apelles' treasure-trove was killed for her surpassing beauty by the jealousy of woman on the steps of the temple of Aphrodite, before she had had very many years to profit by his teaching."

"She was not much loss," said Maryx. "She left the well

too willingly. So you care little for your Feronia? Well, it is not of the best epoch. In her time they had already begun to manufacture statues; to make the figures of gods and emperors, and await orders what heads to affix to them. When Christianity killed sculpture, after all she did not strangle a muse, but a mechanical toy."

"A muse cannot be strangled; she may be starved. When Christianity crushed the mechanism of Art, the Muses veiled themselves, and hid from men; but they lived, and can be found again. You know their dwelling-place."

"They turn their faces from me oftener than you think," said Maryx, with a sigh. "How should we have great Art in our day? We have no faith. Belief of some sort is the life-blood of Art. When Athene and Zeus ceased to excite any veneration in the minds of men, sculpture and architecture both lost their greatness. When the Madonna and her son lost that mystery and divinity, which for the simple minds of the early painters they possessed, the soul went out of canvas and of wood. When we carve a Venus now, she is but a light woman; when we paint a Jesus now, it is but a little suckling, or a sorrowful prisoner. We want a great inspiration. We ought to find it in the things that are really beautiful, but we are not sure enough, perhaps, what is so. What does dominate us is a passion for nature; for the sea, for the sky, for the mountain, for the forest, for the evening storm, for the break of day. Perhaps when we are thoroughly steeped in this we shall reach greatness once more. But the artificiality of all modern life is against it; so is its cynicism. Sadness and sarcasm make a great Lucretius as a great Juvenal, and scorn makes a strong Aristophanes; but they do not make a Praxiteles and an Apelles; they do not even make a Raffaelle, or a Flaxman."

"Even!"

"Yes, even. Raffaelle was the most wondrous draughtsman, and the sweetest of all living poems; but there have been painters far higher than he in vision and far nobler in grasp. Really, looking into them, his pictures say very little, almost nothing. It is his perfect life that dazzles us; it is so perfect —cradled in that old eyrie of Urbino, and dropping in its bloom like a pomegranate flower, mourned by the whole of Rome. Nothing could be lovelier than such a life—save such a death!"

"No. 'Celui qui a passé par la porte de la désillusion est mort deux fois.' Raffaelle alone of all men that have ever lived never passed that fatal door of disenchantment. Yet I am not

sure that Domenichino was not a truer artist at heart. Domenichino lived under a continued shadow of pain and calumny, but in that stormy twilight he saw great visions, though he could ill embody them."

"And they broke his heart amongst them. It is very sad always to be born for Art where Art is decaying and dying: Raffaelle must have seen that the miraculous gourd of the Renaissance was withering, but he does not seem to have sorrowed."

"We, ourselves, are only eating the stalk of the gourd now: do we suffer?"

"I think we do. All that we create that is worth anything—it is not much that is so—is marked out by two things, melancholy and doubt. Not a puerile melancholy nor an insolent doubt, but the immeasurable dreariness of a soul that is adrift like a rudderless ship on an unknown sea. There never was any age so sad at heart as ours."

"Is that a praise or a reproach?"

"Neither. Only a fact."

"It at least shows we have no vanity. We have ceased to believe ourselves the care of gods, the heirs of eternity. We know ourselves to be only motes upon the rays of a light which is but made of mere empty gases as the marsh lights are!"

"And that is not the temper which conceives greatly or produces greatly. If Alexander had believed himself a bubble of gas instead of the son of a god, he would not have changed the face of the world. Negation cannot be the parent of heroism, though it will produce an indifference that counterfeits it not ill, since Petronius here died quite as serenely as ever did the martyrs of the Church."

"You would argue then that superstition is the soul of the hero and of the artist! A sorry conclusion."

"Faith is—of some sort. It matters little whether it be in divinity or humanity. The worst fault of the arts now is that they have not even faith in themselves. Take my own: it has lost belief in its own power to charm. Falconet,—who, nevertheless, was a clever man, and more right, perhaps, about Michael Angelo than we like to allow,—Falconet exactly struck the death-note of the plastic arts (though he meant praise), when he said, 'our marbles have *almost* colour.' That is just where we err. We are incessantly striving to make Sculpture at once a romance writer and a painter, and of course she loses all dignity, and does but seem the jay in borrowed plumes of sable. There

is no greater sign of the weakness and feverishness of the arts in our day than the way in which they all borrow one from another, mistrusting their own isolated force: the musicians with their compositions in chiaroscuro, the painters with their symphonies in red and grey, the poets with their studies in sepia, or their motives in brown and white;—it is all false and unreal, sickly and borrowed, and sculpture does not escape the infection. Conceits are altogether out of keeping with marble. They suit a cabinet painting or a piece of china. Bernini was the first to show the disease when he veiled the head of his Nile to indicate that its source was unknown!—a costume-designer's trick for a carnival masquerade."

"Bernini could not be better than that; he had to please Gregory and Louis XIV. Genius cannot escape the taint of its time more than a child the influence of its begetting. Augustus could have Horace and Ovid; he could never have had Homer and Milton."

"I do not think with you. Talent takes the mark of its generation; genius stamps its time with its own impression. Virgil had the sentiment of a united Italy. But then there is so much talent and so little genius at any epoch!"

"Or in any art; and what there is, is dwarfed and cramped by the manner and necessities of modern life. Only think of the Lesbian or Theban poets reciting strophe and antistrophe by moonlight under the cypress trees, crowned with the olive of victory, and with a whole nation listening in rapture underneath the stars. Now-a-days Pindar or Myrnedes or Sappho could only print a book, and 'those who have failed in literature and art' would be free to rate, and rail, and lie about them in print, likewise."

"There are two sides to that. For one, I think that there is something even finer than the crowds and the olive wreath in the silence and solitude in which a man may work now, without a sign, until his thoughts go out like a flock of birds suddenly set free, over all lands, and to all peoples, finding welcome and bearing seed to the farthest and the lowliest corners of the earth. Besides, people were not so very different then; critics snarled and sneered till victims hanged themselves for sorrow, and 'sad and tender songs were sold with silvered faces.' We have Pindar's and Plato's own lament for it. No, were I a poet, I would be content with the present time. Instead of Ægina and Hymettus, you have the whole world."

"And were I a sculptor I would be content. Instead of

Olympus, you have a complete knowledge of comparative anatomy! But now make me more known to your living statue there; she, I see, is like Sappho, 'a nursling of the Graces and Persuasion,'—only she is so silent."

"She is thinking of your songs which have silvered faces, but are not written for gold," said Maryx. "Giojà, my dear, look up and speak."

She lifted her beautiful serious eyes to Hilarion.

Of old, he to whom Phœbus taught the arts of song, learned also the arts of magic and of healing. Hilarion had learned the magic, but how to heal he had never cared to ask Phœbus.

The sun had set, and there came cold winds from Soracte, and mists from the sea.

"It grows chilly," said Hilarion. "Let us go indoors. There are roses there, and something to drink and eat, and there is a boy who plays the flute not ill—I brought him with me. The flute is almost as sweet as a nightingale when you shut the player from sight."

He turned to her as became his right, for it was he who was master of Daïla:—not we. Giojà rose from beside the goddess of freedmen, and, still silent and almost shy, went with him.

I thought of the girl at the well on Akrokorinth, that he had spoken of, whom Apelles found drawing water, and whom he led in with the earthen aryballos on her pretty head to the banquet of the painters in the city of fair women.

"Do you laugh because of her blushes?" said Apelles. "Do not fear, I will make her as skilled in all the ways of love as any one of them that goes up, perfumed and curled, in her tunic of gauze, to worship Aphrodite Melœnis."

Not that I was afraid.

And besides, as Maryx had said, since Laïs left the well so willingly she was but little loss. No doubt if Apelles had not passed that way, she would have tired of drawing water, and would have envied those young slaves whom the ship by the quays brought to furnish the hosts of pleasure, and would have gone up of her own will to worship Aphrodite in the sweet secret cypress forest.

And, yet again, besides this, I was sure that my seaborn Ariadnê had nothing of either Laïs in her.

Nevertheless, I wished Hilarion had not returned, and I was glad that the night closing in let us hear but little of the flute, and see only the first freshness of the roses. He let us go with many expressions of regret, and with a smile.

By some miracle he had no women with him there, and had brought no one but his boy flute-player.

Giojà was still more silent than usual.

"What poems does he write?" she asked me once, in the darkness of the stairs as I took her to her door.

"He writes as Heine says that Aristophanes did," I answered her. "The singing of the nightingales is spoilt by the chattering of the apes that lodge in the blossoming tree of his fancy."

"Will you give them to me to read?"

"You cannot read his tongue."

"I can learn. Why does he let the apes come upon his trees?"

"Heine would say because the tree was set in the darksome swamp of *Weltvernichtungsidee*. There is a long word for you that you cannot translate. Not that he is the least like Aristophanes. The apes on Hilarion's tree never laugh; they mock. But to do him justice, his nightingales are sweet and sad as Aedôn herself—who, by-the-by, had murder on her soul. Good night, my dear. Palès is quite tired; so must you be."

"Could no one persuade him to send the apes away?"

She had her hand on the latch of the door. The old, dim lamp she carried shone upon her face.

"When a man has once kept company with such apes as these, it is hard for him to forego them," I said to her. "And it is best not to meddle with his taste; he has his hours for the nightingales. Good night, my dear."

"Good night."

She went within and dreamt, I fear, of Apollo Soranus with the face of Hilarion, of the "sweet glad angels of the spring," that sang of heaven, and of apes and snakes out of Soracte's sacred caverns that hissed and drowned the song.

I had not done very wisely. I had made her pity him, with a soft vague pity, all the tenderer because she could not in the most distant way understand the disease from which he suffered; the moral disease of Apollo Soranus, who, through his sweet music, with the celestial rays above his head, yet breathed miasmic vapours upon men, and bade them sin and die.

CHAPTER XIII.

Next day I had divers errands to execute, and shoes to take home; amongst them, I went to the old Palazzo Spada, having some boots of a custodian there, and looked in for the five hundredth time at Pompey's statue, which always seduces one to stand and think, remembering what blood was once set flowing at its feet.

If Cæsar had not gone out that day, but had hearkened to the warning of Calpurnia's dream, would the fate and the face of the world have been very much changed after all? Probably not: for, any way, when his death should have come, Octavius would have succeeded him. Augustus found Rome brick and left it marble—perhaps, though, there was a deal of brick underneath his marble. But he found men virile and left them venal: and the world is still eating the lotus seeds that he sowed broadcast.

Liberty and the old wooden Ovilia, like a sheep-pen, was better than the ornamental and stately Septa of Agrippa, with liberty a laughing-stock, and manliness sunk in the laps of courtezans and the couches of slaves.

Thinking of Cæsar and Cæsarism—which never will thoroughly pass off the earth, because it is safe-rooted in the chronic cowardice and indolence and need of leadership ingrained in human nature—I crossed the Square of Capo di Ferro, and passing an arched kitchen where they were baking loaves and pastries, which they sold just outside it on the pavement, I heard the master-baker beating and belabouring a little baker-boy.

I always rescue little cook-boys for sake of Golden Claude, and I went in and freed the child by a few reasonable words, and more strongly reasoning pence. One may be a genius and yet burn a biscuit. Saxon Alfred did, who was here too in Rome, you know, a fair-haired seven-year-old child. I wish Julius and Bramante had left the old basilica standing, if only for sake of that pretty northern boy, who came so far on pilgrimage from the Barbarian isle.

I went along the dirty vegetable market of the Campo dei Fiori, where once the flames bore " to those worlds which he had

imagined" the great master of Free Thought. I walked on, hearing still my little baker-boy's sobs of gratitude, and thinking of Claude Lorraine, and what an odd thing it was that a creature too stupid to slip a cake properly into an oven, and too awkward to put it properly on a plate when baked, should have had the sense of the sunset and the soul of the sunrise in him as he had!

It is very wonderful; for, say what you like, a great painter he is, though artificial, and if anything would make one hate a classic temple he would do it, but a great painter, beyond doubt, and one who would not have been even artificial if he would but have worked out of doors; but though he would sit for hours out of doors, he would always go within to paint, which is what spoilt him.

Thinking of Claude and of that fugitive golden glow, which he who could not brown a biscuit could imprison on his canvas, I walked across the Field of the Flowers, where not a flower grows, so much death has it seen and still does see; and my thoughts strayed away to the time when on its stones a grocer's lad recited and improvised there to an enraptured throng, and Hellenic scholars metamorphosed his name to Metastasio.

"Dreaming by daylight, Crispino?" said a voice I knew. "But that you always do. Well, you are right, for dreams are the best part of life."

It was the voice of Hilarion. He was coming across the square, with his calm smile in his eyes that had always a little mockery in them; an indulgent mockery, for human nature indeed was a very poor thing in his sight, but then he admitted that was not its own fault.

He greeted me in kindly manner, and turned and walked beside me. He had none of the pride which would have moved some men to be ashamed at being seen with an old cobbler with a leather apron twisted up about his loins. Indeed, he had too much pride for any such poor sentiment; what he chose to do was his own law and other people's, or if it were not other people's it ought to be so:—besides, Hilarion, practically the most tyrannical of masters, was theoretically the most democratic of thinkers. In his eyes all men were equal—in littleness of worth.

How handsome he was as he came across the old desolate place with the shadows of the huge Cancelleria and of the granite colonnades from the Theatre of Pompey falling sombrely across his path!—almost more so than when I had first seen his face as a boy on the night that his light o' love died.

How handsome he was!—one could not but feel it as one feels the beauty of a roebuck, of a diamond, of a palm-tree, of a statue, of a summer night. It was real beauty, mournful and tender, but not emasculated; he had the form of the disc-thrower in the Vatican, and the face of my Borghese Bacco. I could understand how women loved Hilarion, just because he looked at them, just because they could not help it. I did the same, though there were things and thoughts I hated in him, and times when I fancied it might be possible for one to kill him—and do well.

"If you had really loved one woman,"—I had sometimes said to him. And he had smiled.

"Women are best in numbers. Who makes a pasty with one truffle?"

That was all he knew. The poet who would write of Sappho and of Sospitra and of the great passion in the words that burn, knew no more of it than a man moulding casts in plaster here knows of the art of Pheidias or of the face of the bronze Athene.

To Hilarion love was an appetite, an animal pleasure—and no more.

Women were soft pretty brutes like panthers, that one stroked with the more pleasure because of the peril in their velvet paws. They were all like Lilas to him, some lower some higher, but no more worth to weep over when lost. So he said in his delicate, bitter, amorous, cruel voice:—and so he said in his heart.

"Who is she?" he asked of me without preface, moving beside me across the cabbage-strewn stones of the Campo dei Fiori.

"Maryx told you," I answered him.

"Of course he did not tell the truth. How could he before her? Tell me their story."

"There is no other to tell, and Maryx never lies. It is not what you think. She learns with him. No more. For myself——"

Then I told him how I had found her coming travel-worn and weary from the sea.

"It is very pretty," he said when I had ended. "And Maryx and you are good enough for anything:—even to play the part of the divine Lupercus to such a lamb!"

There was more of sincerity than sarcasm in his words, yet there was enough of the latter to anger me.

"It does not need much virtue," I said, roughly, "still less divinity, to act like decent men."

"Lupercus objected to the wolf, but never to the Flamen's fire and knife," said Hilarion, with a little laugh at my irritation "You have given her over to the Flamen, since you have devoted her to art. Art for a woman! and that insatiable art too! Think of Properzia of Bologna."

"It was not art that killed Properzia. It was the love, or rather the cruelty of man. Do you stay long this winter?"

"My dear Lupercus, I do not know. Life loses something—spent out of Rome. It is only here that each day holds for us two thousand years. Now tell me all you have done besides finding an Ariadnê?—not that the Borghese bust is an Ariadnê, but that does not matter at all—what palimpsests have you lighted on?—what early Boccaccio or black-letter St. Jerome have you picked up for a drink of wine?—what mural paintings have you stumbled on through a hole in the grass that Palès made after a rat?—what ivory pyx beyond price have you found an old woman keeping her pills or her pins in? And to think there are people in the world who do not care for a pyx or a palimpsest! And to think that learning has ever been figured as a serious and wearisome thing! As if there were any other thing that could make life one-half so entertaining! What else can paint a whole teeming Agora on the dull face of a single old coin, and embalm a whole nation's faith in a mere branch of rosemary? Do you not pity from your soul the poor folks to whom the palimpsest is only an old scrawled scroll, and the pyx a box of bone? And then learning is the only pleasure that one cannot exhaust! It is the deep sea that the child showed St. Augustine. The deepest waders amongst us touch scarcely more than its surf. If love were but like learning!——"

"What has become of Neria?"

Neria was the dark-browed singer who had left Rome with him.

"Neria?—her temper was insupportable, or mine was, I have forgotten which. Neria was the mistress of Mars; I am not Mars, and I like peace."

"That is, you like to be inconstant without being reproached for it."

"Perhaps. All men do, I suppose. Reproaches are an error: when they begin to reproach me I give them something that they wish for; very much as the Romans sacrificed the *porca præsentanea*, when they buried a dead body; and then I

see them no more. There are two women that I should have liked to have known; they are the second Faustina and S. Elizabeth of Hungary. They are the most singular women that ever lived, and the most unlike to each other that the world ever saw."

"Which would keep you longest?"

"Faustina no doubt: innocent women are always forsaken. One is too sure of them."

And with that terrible truth he paused by an old stall in the street, allured by the glimmer of an onyx, on which was carved the veiled figure of Pudicitia, with one hand hidden in her robe.

Some Roman lover had had it engraved for his bride, I dare say; some soft serious creature who put all her soul into the *ubi tu Gaius, ego Gaia,* when she crossed his threshold; and lived at home, and never opened her doors to the roysterers of the Bona Dea in the December nights, and never donned a transparent tunic and drank the philtres of the East, and spent all his substance in love-gifts and license when all the town was shouting Io Saturnalia, but went in quiet and humility to her own altar, and prayed for her unborn child to mother Ops and Spes. There were such women even in Cæsarean Rome. There are such women always everywhere—lest men should quite despair.

"Poor Pudicitia! Perhaps this was a signet stone of one of the Agrippinas," said Hilarion, with a little laugh, buying the seal. "It was a fashion to salute the foulest empresses in her name. There are many fashions of old Rome we cling to still. Do you remember that the first statue of Modesty, the veiled one of the Forum Boarium, was always called by the people the statue of Fortune? It may serve as a pretty enough allegory that the good fortune of a nation does lie in the chastity of its women, though I do not suppose that the Romans meant that. I wonder what other statues I shall find at Daïla. I shall give myself up for awhile to Daïla. If one could only discover the Kypris Anadyomene! But it never came into Italy. What would you like the best if you could choose of all the lost treasures of the world? I think I would have that copy of the Iliad corrected by Aristotle, that Alexander always carried about with him shut in its golden box."

"Or the famous three lines that Apelles and Protogenes drew—if it were only to stop the eternal squabbling of artists about it."

"Yes, Pliny does not tell one enough, though he saw it

himself, so he might have said more. I would sooner, perhaps, have the portrait of Kampaspe, or the Kypris, or the Zeus. Not but what, though Maryx would call it a heresy, I always fancy myself that those chryselephantine and polylithic statues, with their eyes of precious stones, must have been in reality very ugly. I would rather have the lost Lycurgeia or the Montefeltro Menander, or the missing books of Tacitus, or that history of Etruria which Claudius wrote; because he was a scholar, you know, though an imbecile in other things, and it might have given us the key to the language. Perhaps, though, better than all, I would choose in a heap all those lovely pagan things that Savonarola and his boys burnt on Palm Sunday, the Petrarch with the illuminated miniatures included. When one thinks of all those things it does really seem just that he was burnt himself! Indeed, why does the world make such a lament over his burning? It does not care for Giordano Bruno's, who perished on this very spot we are crossing. Yet Giordano Bruno was far the finer man of the two. It required a thousandfold more courage to refuse the crucifix than to raise it, in those days. Savonarola was a narrow ascetic, who preached the miserly creeds that have sheared the earth bare of all beauty. Yes, when one thinks of all the classic marbles and erotic pictures and priceless relics of the early arts that his fanaticism lost to us for ever, one cannot but feel that though the world sees but little fair measure, it did see some for once, when the pile was lit for the preacher. Not that anybody meant to be just in burning him; men always stumble on justice by the merest accident when they do chance to arrive at it at all."

So he talked, passing over the Campo dei Fiori, talked discursively, as his habit was, of all things relevant and irrelevant, as the fancy occurred to him.

Then he left me and went into a dark doorway, to see some artist, as he said.

It was quite evening when my errands were all done, and I got home again to Palès and the fountain in the wall; for one cannot walk straightly in Rome; if you have brains and eyes, nohow will your feet carry you dully on your proper road; there will be always some old angle of acanthus cornice, some colossal porphyry fragment, some memory of monastic legend or of pagan feast; some fancy that here stood such a temple, or there lived such a poet; some marble seen ten thousand times and never seen enough, some church-doors set wide open with the

torches and the jewels and the white robes gleaming in the dusk, some palm-tree leaning over a high palace-wall that may have come from Asia with the worship of Sol Invictus and Astarte, when Orontes overflowed into Tiber:—always something to turn aside for and linger over, and set one wondering and sighing; for although Hilarion is right, that learning is the only pleasure of which there is no surfeit, and which lends a lovely light to all the darkest corners where we walk, yet all our choicest knowledge is at best but a mitigated ignorance.

The wisest men I have ever known have always been the first to say so. Of course I cannot judge myself, having only picked up a little knowledge, as poor travellers see beautiful things by looking in through such doors and gates as stand open along the wayside.

It was quite evening when I got back to the barking of Palès and the singing of my Faun; a good woman at a fruit-stall had given me some prickly pears and pomegranates, and I thought I would take them to Giojà; I had seldom much to give, and I knew she was always at home at this hour, for she went to bed with the birds and rose with them.

When I climbed the steep stairs and opened her door, her lamp was burning, but the window was opened, and left in sight the sky, still tinged with the pale primrose light of the dead day, with here and there the stars already out. She had some great books before her on the table, and was leaning her arms upon them, and her cheeks upon her hands; her face was upturned, the light of the lamp fell on it; Hilarion was leaning against the casement, and was talking to her.

I felt angry, which was foolish; and as though some wrong were done to me and Maryx, which was more foolish still.

"Dear Crispin, I have been expecting you an hour," said he; and that I felt was a lie, for he had known where I had been going, and knew my dilatory and divergent ways of going anywhere. There were some great lilies and rose-red cactus flowers, and other blossoms very rare at that time of the year; of course he had brought them there. Not that there was any harm in that.

"She is perfect, your Ariadnê," he said, as we went down awhile later into the street together. "At least she will be. At present she is not fairly awake. She has her soul shut in her marbles. Has Maryx no eyes?"

"Maryx has honour."

Hilarion laughed a little.

"Dear Lupercus, how grave you are! So you have given her your room, and your Hermès, and all your treasures? You never told me that."

"How did you find her, then?"

"Oh, that was easy enough. Can you live at a street corner and hope to keep a secret? She has really genius. It is a pity."

"Why? since it is all she has?"

"Is it all? Maryx and you are as cruel as the Pontifex Maximus when the fires were let out. Art for a woman is as sad as the temple of Vesta. To gather the sacred grain, and draw the sacred water, and guard the sacred flame—that was not worth one little hour of joy. The Romans knew that. Their Venus Felix had always a child in her arms."

Then he took his horse which waited there, and went away through the dark to Daïla. I went back for a moment.

"What do you think of him?" I asked her.

She hesitated a moment, and it seemed to me that she coloured a little.

"He is beautiful," she said, softly: sculptor-like, form was what she thought of first.

"The most beautiful man the world ever saw was Heliogabalus," I said to her. "And perhaps the next most beautiful was St. Just."

She looked at me in surprise, her hands amongst the lilies and cactus flowers.

"I thought he was your friend?"

I felt the rebuke, and was ashamed.

"He is very great in the world, is he not?" she asked.

"Yes, in a way. It is not Maryx's way. Hilarion's fame is like that cactus flower, glorious, brilliant, lustrous, born of a barren stem, and without fruit; the fame of words that burn but do not illumine."

She put the cactus blossoms together tenderly.

"He says beautiful things, and I think he is not happy. Look, did you ever see such flowers even here? Maryx says one must never attempt flowers in marble. That it is absurd, as it would be to try and reproduce the dew or the waves. Otherwise, one might make a head of the Dea Syria, crowned with those cacti——"

"Yes. They would be appropriate symbols for the religion that embodied the corruption of Rome."

I was angry, unwisely so; the cacti were to me symbols of corruption.

She had left the flowers and was drawing. Maryx had taught her that design must underlie all great sculpture, as the skeleton underlies the beauty of human or animal form, and until she could satisfy him with the chalk he had always refused to trust her with the clay. Hence her designs were fine and firm and fearless.

"Tell me all you know of him," she said; "'Hilarion?' What country is that name? Hilarion was a saint in the desert, you know."

I would not answer her at first, but she would not be denied; she had a stubborn resoluteness under her soft and serious ways. I told her reluctantly about him; it was not very much that I knew that was fit for her ears, but I had always had a love for him, and he had done me and others grateful and gracious things: of those I spoke, in justice to him, knowing I had been churlish and unfair. Then, at her entreaties, which I never could well withstand, I went to an old credenza against the wall, where I kept some few books, black-letter and otherwise, and found a volume he had written, and read to her two or three of his poems, translating them as I went, though I felt that I spoiled sadly the languid and melodious dithyrambics of his genius.

She listened in perfect silence, drawing with her charcoal and chalk all the while by the light of the lamp, under the statue of Hermès.

At length I shut up the book, angry with myself for having given in to her.

"It is getting late—at least late for you. Put up your work, my dear," I said to her, and looked at what she was doing.

She had drawn the head of Hilarion in as perfect a likeness as it was possible to see, and had crowned it with the cactus flowers like a Syrian god.

"It would do for an Antinous; and he was a slave and a suicide," I said, venomously, for I would not admit the excellence of the work or its grace.

"Oh no," she said, lifting the lamp to light me to the door. "It would do for an Agathon: I should think he is like Agathon. It was so good of you to read me his songs. You will read me some more, to-morrow?"

What other girl or woman in the whole world would have

thought of Agathon of Athens as a likeness for him;—of him of the "Flower," and of the "Symposium," whom all men united to call "the beautiful!"

I had been a fool, I said to myself, stumbling down the dark stairs to see that my stall was safe. Palès woke out of her sleep in the straw, and told me that I had been a fool, and the Faun in the fountain was silent.

CHAPTER XIV.

Hilarion had asked me to breakfast with him on the following day. I went, walking across the Campagna in the tracks between the honeysuckle banks, where the ox-carts go. The earth is most beautiful at dawn, but so very few people see it, and the few that do are almost all of them labourers, whose eyes have no sight for that wonderful peace, and coolness, and unspeakable sense of rest and hope which lie like a blessing on the land. I think if people oftener saw the break of day, they would vow oftener to keep that dawning day holy, and would not so often let its fair hours drift away with nothing done, that were not best left undone.

I had the mutilated volume from the Aldus press in my pocket for him, for he loved such things, and had a fine knowledge of them; the thyme was sweet under my feet; the goats plucked at the long creepers in the broken arches of the aqueduct; big oxen with wide-branching horns passed, ringing the bells about their necks; the sun rose red; birds sang in the low clumps of bearberry and hawthorn; little field-mice scudded before my steps, where the wheels of Sulla's triumphal chariot once had rolled; and Palès chased a rat where gens on gens of the great Roman world lay buried root and branch.

But I could enjoy but little of it. I felt uneasy, and in a vague alarm.

I found him in the great walled garden that lay behind his villa.

He was lying at full length in a hammock of silk netting, that

swung between magnolia stems; and his flute-boy was playing, seated in the grass. There was a delicious calm about the place; the autumnal roses were all in bloom, and thickets of the Chinese olive scented the air like the incense of some Indian god's temple.

There was a high wall near, covered with peach-trees,' and topped with wistaria and valerian, and the handsome wild caperplant; and against the wall stood rows of tall golden sunflowers late in their blooming; the sun they seldom could see for the wall, and it was pathetic always to me as the day wore on, to watch the poor stately amber heads turn straining to greet their god, and only meeting the stones and the cobwebs, and the peach-leaves of their inexorable barrier.

They were so like us!—straining after the light, and only finding bricks and gossamer and wasps'-nests! But the sunflowers never made mistakes as we do: they never took the broken edge of a glass bottle, or the glimmer of a stable lanthorn for the glory of Helios, and comforted themselves with it—as we can do.

"If this wall were mine, I should throw it down for their sakes," I said to Hilarion; "though, to be sure, by the time it came down, every poor helianthus would each be dead with frost."

"Would you sacrifice my peaches for those weeds? Crispin, you should have been born a poet. You are improvident enough for one. Taste those peaches. That one is the Magdelaine Blanche, and that yonder is the Pucelle de Malines. Are you learned in fruit? I am when I am in France. But here, you have no great gardening. Everything grows too easily. Your husbandry is like your brains! Will you hear the boy play?" said Hilarion, stretching himself at ease, amongst the bronze foliage of the magnolia boughs.

The boy played, and beautifully. Hilarion listened with closed eyes.

"If anything could make one believe in immortality it would be music," he said, when the lovely sounds had died away. "The best things I have ever written have been written when I heard music; thought should be like the stones of Thebes. How true in allegory all the old myths are!"

"Where did you find this lad?"

"In a little island off Greece; and I call him Amphion."

"And what will you do with him?"

"Keep him while he pleases me."

"And after?"

"I never think of 'after.' It is the freedom from any obligation to think of it that is the real luxury of tolerable riches——"

"Is the immediate moment sufficient?"

"Perhaps not. But it is the best that one has. You do not choose your peaches well. Take that Téton de Vénus. Will Maryx be here to-day?"

"I fancy not; he is occupied on some great idea that is only in the clay."

Hilarion smiled.

"Or only in the flesh? I wish it may be in the clay. All he does is great. He belongs to another time than ours. One fancies he must have sat at Homer's feet. And he is so unspoiled by fame, and so indifferent to praise. Most of us who have any success in any art, are no wiser than Glaukus, who ran after a mouse and tumbled into a reservoir of honey; and no god-endowed Polyeidus comes to shake *us* back into life and vigour."

"Why do you talk so? You like your tank of honey; it is as sweet as a death 'by Malmsey wine.'"

"Nevertheless, a death it is," said Hilarion, with that contempt of himself and of his career which often moved him. "Perhaps we, too, began by running after a star instead of a mouse, but we stifle in the honey all the same; and the honey has always some stings of the makers left in it. The honey has been waiting for Maryx for twenty years, and he has never fallen into it. He is the strongest man I ever knew; praise has no power to intoxicate him, nor has censure any power to pain."

"You are equally indifferent, I think."

"Oh, no! I am weak enough to be glad that the foolish people come and pull the leaves of my myrtles, because they are my myrtles. Maryx cannot understand that. He is only glad when his own consciousness tells him his work is good. He does not care—I doubt whether he even knows—that a crowd in the streets looks after him. I think there is some charm in marble that keeps sculptors nobler than other men. The lives of most of them have been singularly pure; look at Michael Angelo's, Flaxman's, Canova's, Thorwaldsen's. By the way, I have had the Feronia put in the great hall; she looks well there. They have come on some broken Etruscan pottery now, and are digging deeper; very likely there are tombs underneath all. I

will make an imaginary history of the spot, as the old Dominican, Fra Giovanni Nanni, did about Viterbo. Fancy walking all your life to and fro a cloister, with an old buried city for your Juliet! No doubt he ended by believing his own lies: all dreamers do. I can never understand the complete annihilation of Etruria—can you? It was so mighty a confederacy; but then, after all, it was not so much obliterated as transmuted; all that was Rome's best was Etrurian. Oh, you do not agree to that, because you believe in the Quirites. Well, they were a strong people, but they had no art except war. Let me get you your peach. You do not choose well. There is no time to eat fruit like the early morning—the birds know that. Only we spoil our palates with wine."

He filled my hands with peaches, and then would have me in to his breakfast-table, and seat me at it, having no sort of pride in that way, though much in others; and he praised my Aldus, and decided that it was no Lyons imitation, and talked of the early printers, and of rare copies from their presses, and of anything and everything under the sun in that light yet dreamy fashion, scholarly, and yet half flippant, which was natural to him, and which had a provoking charm of its own that seduced one into strange pleasure, yet irritated one, because the pleasure was after all so shifting and uncertain.

All the while he never once mentioned Giojà, and that alarmed me, because, of what he thought of most, Hilarion was a man to speak the least; for his manner was candid and careless, but his mind was neither.

At last, wisely or foolishly, I spoke of her.

"Have you seen the Nausicaa?" I asked him.

"No. A statue or a picture—new or old?"

"The last work of Maryx."

"Oh! the Nausicaa that was in Paris in spring? I forgot; of course. A most lovely figure. But I do not know but what the original is fairer still."

"You recognised her, then?"

"Beloved Lupercus, am I blind?"

It made me angry to be given that name; it seemed as if we all looked foolish in his eyes; and he was smiling as he spoke. Then, as simple people do blunderingly, and to their own hindrance, and the hurt of those they fain would serve, I took my heart in my hand, and laid it before Hilarion.

"You went to see her last night. I wish you would not. I

read her your poems; I was a fool. She said you were like Agathon of Athens. What other girl could think of that? Can you understand? I am nothing to her; an old man that she asked her way of in the street the day she came to Rome, and old enough to be her grandsire and more; but in a way, you know, I seem too to belong to her, because I never can forget my dream in the Borghese, and it makes me anxious, because Love laughed—he always laughs when he has done his worst. And now she is so utterly at peace; she wants for nothing; she is safe, and all is well. She has true genius too; you may see that in the things that she has done, and she is not like a girl; she has such knowledge of the past, and so much of the strength of art; if she be let alone she will be happy; she will be even great, I think, as that Properzia was we spoke of yesterday. You said that she sleeps still; yes, it is true, she sleeps and sees the gods. It were a sin to wake her. It were a cruelty, and who could measure all that she would lose? You have so much; you have all the world. I wish—I wish that you would let her alone; pass by; think of her as a child asleep, and nothing more, and not go near her."

No doubt I spoke foolishly, but something in what I said touched him as he heard.

We were sitting in one of the great painted chambers, with the angelic hosts of Giulio Romano above our heads; the room was all in shadow, strong beams of light alone finding out here and there the riches it contained, the gems, the marbles, the mosaics, these bronzes, the vases; and one of these rays of sun fell on the eyes of Hilarion; they were troubled and softened, and had a look of pity in them—almost of shame.

"I had no thought of it," he said; and then I knew the error I had committed, and its folly.

"Perhaps it would be a sin," he added, wearily. "Sometimes I think all life is, for that matter; though whether a sin of ours against the gods or of the gods against us, I never am sure. But I had no thought of it. I have entanglements enough—too many—and I do not know why you should be so anxious. What have I done? I took her a few flowers, and sat there for an hour; nothing more."

"An hour has coloured eternity before now," I murmured, knowing that I was unreasonable and unwise. "It is not what you have done; it is what you may do. She has no mother. She is quite alone."

"She has Maryx!" said Hilarion, with a smile I did not like.

"You mistake—if that be what you think. He is her master; nothing more. I am stupid, I dare say, and may seem rude. But I am afraid:—you are capricious and inconstant."

"Is that my fault?" he said, with a sigh—

"'Hätte Gott mich anders gewollt,
Er hätte mich anders gebaut.'

I do not see what any god can ever answer to that charge of Goethe's. It is unanswerable. So you would have me leave your Ariadnê to Maryx?"

"No. I would have you leave her to her art and to herself. I do not think Maryx has any thoughts of her—of that kind. He cares only for her genius. He is a generous man, and good."

"None better. Do not try to make him out a bloodless pedant."

"A pedant!"

"Yes—to talk of his only seeing a muse in her! Maryx is a great man, and greater in nothing than in the manner of his life. But he is human, I suppose. When he modelled his Nausicaa, I doubt if he were half as much a sculptor as a lover. It is not ideal at all. It is simply the girl herself. Maryx for once in his career only copied. He must know that."

"Could he have done better?"

"I do not say he could. I say when we are content only to reproduce a living thing, we are not artists any longer; we are lovers. If the contentment remain with us, Art is exiled."

"Is it in the interests of Art, then, that you are always faithless?"

"Am I so much worse than others?" he said, with a little amusement.

"You are more cruel," I said, simply.

He was silent. He knew that I was right.

"At least, you are cruel when you are tired; and you tire quickly," I said to him.

Hilarion laughed.

"Dear Crispin, you are bitter. I lay no claim to Art. I am sure none of the scattered poets of the Anthology did, and if I be anything at all, I am as one of them. Only they lived in a

happier time than I. So she called me Agathon? I do not think I ever had so pretty a flattery as that."

I could have bitten my tongue off, that I had told him: Agathon of the "Flower" and of the "Symposium!" Agathon of Athens, who was called pre-eminently "the beautiful!" Of course he was not likely to think the less of her, hearing that.

Palès, could she have spoken, would have had more sense than I.

"Her head is full of the people of the past," I said to him. "She lived all alone with the old books, and her father's talk of them. She is like Julian: always expecting to see the gods give signs. All the old time is to her as yesterday to others. It is a good in one way, and an evil in another. I do not think she sees the time she lives in, one whit more than, reading Virgil as she goes, she sees the throngs that bawl and pass her. Of course she may be run over, and be killed so, any day. Virgil will not save her."

"A curious danger! Women do not often suffer much from love of the impersonal. Tell her that all that past she thinks so great, was only very like the Serapis, which men worshipped so many ages in Theophilis, and which, when the soldiers struck it down at last, proved itself only a hollow colossus, with a colony of rats in its head, that scampered right and left. My friend, you drink nothing; taste that tokaï, it comes off my own vines by the Danube, and it is as soft as mother's milk. You have lost your mirth, Crispin. You should not have gone to sleep in the Cæsar's gallery; it has dazed you. You used to be as cheerful as any cricket in the corn."

"Would you promise me?" I said, and hesitated, for it seemed absurd to be so anxious about a danger that was yet unmenaced, and a thing that might be farthest from his thoughts.

Hilarion laughed, and rose.

"Oh, no! I never promise anything; I have not many scruples, but I do scruple about breaking my word, and so I never give it. Why should you be afraid of me? Maryx can hold his own; and I am not Agathon, as she would soon find out, if she saw me ever so little. I am not even young now!"

I was impatient and pained. He saw it, and touched my shoulder with a kindly caressing gesture.

"Come and see some pictures I brought from France. They

are landscapes. Maryx is right, that landscape painting is the only original form of painting that modern times can boast. It has not exhausted itself yet; it is capable of infinite development. Ruysdael, Rembrandt, and the rest, did great scenes, it is true, but it has been left to our painters to put soul into the sunshine of a cornfield, and suggest a whole life of labour in a dull evening sky hanging over a brown ploughed upland, with the horses going tired homeward, and one grey figure trudging after them, to the hut on the edge of the moor. Of course the modern fancy of making nature answer to all human moods, like an Eölian harp, is morbid and exaggerated, but it has a beauty in it, and a certain truth. Our tenderer souls take refuge in the country now, as they used to do in the cloister. Come and see my two Millets, and there are some slighter things by lesser men of his school, that are touching in their way; whom could your dear Claude ever touch?"

"These pictures touch you: do your own peasants ever?"

"No," said Hilarion, "I never think about them."

And he never did. He had been brought up in the purest egotism. No one had even spoken to him of such things as the duties of fortune. He had been given the most careful culture of the mind and the body, and the graces of both: there his education had ended. That he ever did sweet and gracious things was due to the changeful impulses of his nature, and a certain disdain in him of all meanness, which at times became almost nobility. But that was all. And yet one loved him.

Love does not go by attributes, as is said in some comedy. It may be said out of a comedy, and in all sad seriousness. The best loved men and women have seldom been the best men or the best women.

He was summoned away by the arrival of some new treasures that he had bought on his way home; and I went out and looked for the little fluteplayer, whom he called Amphion, and whom we had left sitting where the sunflowers were.

He was as lovely a youth as I have ever seen; with a pale oval face and great eyes, that had the pathos and the meditation of the ox's in them; you laugh—well, look straight into our oxen's eyes when next they meet you coming under the yoke across the fields, and say if all the unutterable sadness and wonder of existence are not in their lustrous gaze. "Why are we here to suffer?" say those eyes; the eternal question that all creation asks and asks in vain for aught that we can see.

Poor little lad;—he was eighteen years old, perhaps, and had lived on one of those little islands of the Ægean, where the population is like one family, lives by the tillage of the earth, sleeps out of doors under the stars—men, women, and children—and is hardly altered at all since the ages of the "Works and Days."

He had run barefoot, leapt in the sea, mown the hay, slumbered on his bit of carpet under the broad shining skies, and been quite happy till a passer-by, touching at the little isle, had heard him play to his goats and for the maidens, and had spread gold before his dazzled parents, and filled his head with dreams by a word or two, and carried him off to the great world of cities—there to be listened to awhile and then forgotten.

Hilarion was kind to him since his fancy was fresh; had him richly dressed in the national costume, and bade his people see that he had all he wanted; but no one except Hilarion could speak modern Greek, and the boy was very lonely.

He looked up at me with the timidity of a dog that had strayed. I myself could speak his tongue, though not with all the modern changes that Hilarion knew, and by little and little I gathered his short story from him.

He was not very happy. He sighed for his barefooted liberty; his little coracle on the sea; his mother's cool little dark hut with all the sun shut out, and no smell but the scent of the cow's breath and the dried grasses; but he did not dare to say so. He loved Hilarion, but he was very afraid of him.

"How long have you been with him?" I asked him, where he sat under the sunflowers.

"It was in the spring he came to the island."

"And you have seen wonderful places since then?"

"Yes," said the boy, wearily. "Many crowds—crowds—crowds. Once some great person, an emperor, came to see him. He had me to play. It did not matter to me. I did not see the great people; I saw the hayfields and the sea, and my white goats running to the honeysuckle. The emperor called me up and gave me a fine ring, and told me I should make my fortune—what is fortune? In the island, he is rich who has six goats."

"I think you will be rich if you go back to your goats—caring for them."

He did not understand.

"They would not know me, perhaps," he said, sadly. "Praxides took them when I came away."

"Animals do not forget, my dear: that is a human privilege. And you would like to go back? You are not very happy?"

He looked with a frightened glance right and left.

"Yes: I would like to go back. But do not tell him. It is better here than it has been. One is in the air. But in that great place they call Paris—it was like being shut in a golden box. I could not play at first, in all that noise and glitter; he was angry, I could not help it. But one day I heard the goats bleat in the street; I thought my heart would break; I ran and got the flute, it was a friend. Then the old songs and the dances came back to me."

Poor little misnamed Amphion!

"You cannot read?" I asked him. He shook his head.

"Not even music?"

"Do people read music? I thought it was in the air."

"You must be lonely?"

"Not when he remembers me. But he does not very often. And I should like to take these shoes off; I feel crippled——"

"We are all crippled. And we have crippled even our horses to keep us company. Two or three thousand years ago in your country the horse was a beautiful, free, joyous thing: now it is an automaton; most of us are so. We call it civilization. The tighter the bonds the more advanced are the wearers deemed. But your gold-laden jacket cannot be as easy as the old white shirt with the red sash."

The boy was silent, crushing a peach with his small dazzling teeth.

I was sorry for him.

Great singers end in millionaires: small singers end as clerks, and this poor, pretty, ill-called Amphion, who played so sweetly that it called tears to your eyes to hear him, had no genius, I thought, but only a beautiful instinct of innocent melody, as a bird has. And you could not make even a clerk of a little Greek, who sighed for the sea and the green grass, and the dances under the stars. He could not read, and he was ignorant of everything in the most absolute manner. Yet he interested me.

It is not what the human being knows, it is what he is, that is interesting.

I think it is Musset who says that the utterances of most men are very monotonous and much alike; it is what is in their heads that is never spoken which is the epic, the idyl, the threnody, the love-sonnet.

He goes on to say that every mortal carries about a world in himself, a world unknown, which lives and dies in silence;—for what a solitude is every human soul!

It is of that inner world that I try to get a glimpse, though reluctantly I am bound to say that I do believe that it does not exist at all in many, and that not a few are as completely empty inside of them by nature as any pumpkin of which a little beggar boy has had the scooping.

"Let him come home with me; he is dull here; there is not a creature that can talk to him," I said to Hilarion a little later.

"Of course, so he be here at night to play for the duchess."

She, whom he spoke of, was a Roman, his reigning caprice of the hour.

"He shall be here," I said, and took Amphion with me in the quick rattling waggon of one of the wine-carriers who was going to the city without his wine, and with only a load of flowers for the gardeners.

Amphion scarcely spoke as we flew over the Campagna. Only once he looked at me with pleasure in his eyes.

"It is like the sea!" he said; he had arrived by night and had seen nothing of it before this.

It was noon when I got to my fountain on the wall; and I had to be busy the rest of the day, and the lad would go back with the wine-cart at sunset. I took him up to Giojà's room; she was sometimes at home at noon, and was so now.

"Here is a Greek boy for you," I said to her, and put Amphion into the chamber with his sad, lovely face, that would have done for Italus, and his pretty dress all loose and white, and shining with gold thread.

"Here is a little Greek for you," I said. "He is all alone and very unhappy, you know his tongue a little; will you try and make him a little happier?"

"Are you a Greek, really?" said my Ariadnê, coming to him with her grave courtesy, which never was familiarity, but always a little distant like some girl-queen's.

"Yes, I am a Greek," said Amphion, who stood looking at her in a kind of awe.

Giojà's face lighted and grew eager.

"Then you have heard Homer sung? Tell me—do they recite it all at night as they used to do round the watch-fires when there is danger, and in the summer in time of peace, under the olive trees—tell me?"

"What is Homer?" said poor Amphion.

Giojà glanced at him with contempt.

"You are no Greek," she said, and turned away.

"Why did you bring him here?" she said to me. "He asks what Homer is!"

"My dear," I said to her, "he was a little peasant, on a little isle in the sea; I have been to those islands; the people only think of their flocks and their hay and their harvest. They tell tales indeed at night, as of old, but it is not of Achilles and Ithakus now; it is of the hill thieves on the main shore, or of the soldiers billeted on themselves, or of the next love that the priest is to bless, or of whatever else may be happening. Be kind to him. You can make him understand, though you only know the Greek of the poets. And he will play to you."

Amphion, who could not understand what I said, understood the contempt of those lustrous eyes resting on him, and felt that it was something shameful not to know what Homer was.

He came with shy and timid grace, and knelt to her, and touched the hem of her skirt with his lips.

"I cannot read, and Homer—is it a singer you mean?—but if you will let me play I will tell you so what I feel; you are like the sunrise on our sea; our girls there are fair, but not like you."

Giojà laughed, a thing she seldom did.

"You come from the country of Helen, and call *me* good to look upon?—and what music can there ever be like the march of the hexameters telling of your heroes? But if you are not happy—then I am sorry. I suppose I speak ill; I know enough Greek to read it, but that is not your Greek. You can play to me while I finish my work if you like, and afterwards I will tell you about Homer."

He had his flute in pieces in his vest, where he always carried it, a silver flute that Hilarion had bought for him.

He sat down on the floor, as he was used to sit on his bit of carpet under the great plane-tree at home in the starry evenings; and, with his eyes still fastened on her as on some creature of another world, he began to make his tender melodies, there at the foot of my Hermes.

I left them so, and went my way down to the stall and Palès, who was grumbling sore at being left alone so long.

They were a boy and girl, it was a fresher and more healthful interest for her than the poems of Hilarion.

When I went up the stairs an hour afterwards to see if they were friends, I opened the heavy door so that I did not disturb them. Amphion was sitting on the floor, his flute lying across his knees, and Giojà, seated high above on the old oak-seat under the Hermes, was telling him the story of Patrocles' burial, and of how the absent Winds were feasting in the house of Zephyrus till the swift-footed Iris fetched them, and how they rose and scourged the clouds before them, across the Thracian sea, until the flames leaped up, and making night terrible, devoured the body of his hero and the golden curls of his friend, and the honey and the horses, and the rich wood steeped with the wine that all night long Achilles poured from the golden bowl till daylight broke.

Amphion's pale face was glowing, and his eyes were full of wonder: nothing so wearies as a twice-told tale, says Homer; but yet he told tales that echoing through thousands of years are ever fresh and ever welcome.

Giojà, to whom every word that she recited was true as that the sun hung high in heaven, saw nothing of him, but only saw the Thracian shore, the blowing flames, the surging sea, the peace that came with morn.

I closed the door unheard, unwilling to disturb them or break in on those old sweet Greek cadences that her voice tinged with a Latin accent, not ungracious; and I was sorry when still another hour later I had to fetch the lad away to go back, as he was ordered to Daïla.

"I was going now to tell him of Ulysses," said Giojà, reluctantly. "Only think! He has a brother called Ulysses, and yet does not know——"

"It will be for another day," I said. Amphion's face had a warm colour in it, and looked happy.

"I may come again?"

"Yes. Do you still wish to go back to the goats?"

"No," he said, and smiled.

"I do not care for the heroes," he whispered to me as we went down the stairs. "And why did he burn his friend? I do not understand. But do not tell her;—the sound of her voice is so lovely;—that is enough."

I began to doubt whether I should not have done better for him to have left him in his solitude and sorrowfulness, eating his peaches underneath the wall with the sunflowers. But I had been thinking more of her than of him. To interest her in

something living and natural, instead of always old stories and old marble, seemed to me desirable. The boy was better than Apollo Soranus.

Maryx passed me that evening on the stairs.

"Is Giojà there?" he asked. "I have a pleasure for her, at least if it be one to her; she is so unlike to others that one cannot tell. They want her at the Caprarola palace to-night."

"In that great world?" I stammered; for they were amongst the haughtiest of our princes.

"Is she not worthy it?" said Maryx, with some impatience of me and contempt. "Nay—is that worthy her? They have seen her clay figures and her drawings; they would see her; it would be best; she lives too much alone. Can we persuade her?"

"But in her clothes—she has none fit."

"I thought of that. I got Ersilia to steal me one of her old woollen dresses when there was first talk of it a week ago; I have clothes fit for her below. But will she go? That is what I doubt——"

"Will Hilarion be there?"

"No doubt. Why?"

"Tell her so. She will go then."

Maryx changed countenance a little, and his broad brows knit together.

"Has he so much influence—already?"

"No influence that I know of; but attraction."

"Do you want me?" asked Giojà at that moment, her slender body hanging over the rail in the gloom; the lamp that always burned there under a Madonna shone on the soft colours of her face, and gave it a Titian look. He told her why he came. She did not answer anything.

"Are you glad or sorry, willing or unwilling? Say!" he said a little quickly, and with some disappointment.

"How can I be either? It does not matter."

"You are right. It does not matter. Only so many are so pleased at such things—will you come?"

"If you wish me."

"Oh, child! It is the greatest house in Rome, and what an honour!" cried Ersilia, who was washing at a tub in a niche in the staircase wall.

"In a great house or a small, I suppose one is always oneself," said Giojà, to whose mind no ideas of social difference

could present themselves; she had only lived on the wild sea-coast and in the old chamber with Hermes, on the bridge; and in the house of Maryx all greatness was fused into that of art, and no other recognised.

Maryx himself stood thoughtful and a little troubled.

"I think that it is best," he said, half to me, half to himself. "It is unjust to her, it is selfish, to shut her up like a dove in a tower. What do you say——?"

"I suppose it is. And to the tower the hawks can come."

"St. Barbara's father built a tower to keep her in and shut out the blessed news of Christ," said Ersilia from her washtub. "But it was of no use, you know. The great news found her there. No tower is too high for the angels to soar to——"

"And so you mean——?"

"That, whether hawk or angel is to be her fate, either will come to her, whether she be here or there," said Ersilia, wringing her linen.

"You are a fatalist," said Maryx, with a smile. "It is a curious creed: it nerves whilst it emasculates."

"Nay, I am a good Christian," said Ersilia, who did not understand a word he said, but felt that he impugned her faith; "and I will get my hands dry in a minute, and go fetch that box of clothes. Why dilly-dally about it? Let her have honour and pleasure while she can. There is not much to be had anywhere."

That was a joyous and grand night to Ersilia; but it was doomed to be a hapless one. We did our best in honesty of intent. The gods made sport of us; and I think there are few things sadder than the way in which honest intents and candid and innocent efforts to do right are, so often as we see them in this world, twisted and turned by obstinate and unkind influences to the hurt of those that feel them. It is as cruel as though one were to take a child's long curls to strangle him with, when he was coming up for kisses.

It was a joyous night to Ersilia, who, in truth, had been sometimes picked to pieces by the neighbours for harbouring a strange girl.

"She goes amongst the princes," she said proudly to all her gossips. And she attired her with a tenderness one never would have believed could have been in her, looking at her fierce and broad black eyes that lit so quickly into rage.

But an hour later Ersilia called to me shrilly, coming to the

end of the bridge and screaming in a way that would have almost frightened back Porsenna, had he been, as of yore, on the other side.

I hurried to her call.

"Only think!" shouted Ersilia, her face all in a dark flame of wrath. "Only think—she will not wear them! No, not for anything will she wear them! Was there ever such perversity? Come you and speak to her. Lovely stuffs fit for an empress! I always said she was not natural. The marble has got into her herself. Who ever heard of any girl that did not care for clothes?"

"What is it, Giojà?" I asked her when I had mounted.

"I will not wear them!" she said simply. "I did not understand. If I cannot go as I am, then not at all. These clothes must have cost much money, and I have none."

"Money!" screamed Ersilia. "Of course! Money! Enough for an honest girl's dower, that I know, for he grudged nothing! How can you look at them and say you will not put them on? Jesù Maria! It is impious."

"Why will you not wear them?" I asked Giojà quietly.

The tears came in her eyes.

"I shall be sorry if I pain him. He is good and generous. But I cannot pay for them. I will not take them. No, I will not."

"But, my dear, it is impossible for you to go to a great house unless you go suitably——"

"Then I will not go; I do not care to go. What is it to me?—except that I am sorry if I pain him."

"May one enter?" said Hilarion, standing at the door, and not perceiving me. It had grown dusk, and the lights were beginning to burn on the winding bank of the river.

When he did see me he smiled—that tantalising smile of his which might mean anything or nothing, and must have hurt many a woman worse than a blow or an oath.

Giojà coloured as she saw him—a warm, wavering blush that went to the very waves of the hair hanging over her brows. She was silent.

The white robes of Maryx's choosing were lying there with some jewellery of Etruscan gold found by himself years before in old tombs opened at his cost under the thick brushwood about Veii.

"What is the question at issue? May I hear?"

He spoke as if he had already known her for years.

Giojà looked at him with the flush fading.

"It is that I will not wear—all that. He has sent it: he is always so good. But why should I go thither even? I do not want the great people, if they be great; nor am I great myself, that they should seek me. If I could go as I am it would be very well; but if I cannot I will stay away. The things are beautiful, no doubt; but the very last words nearly that my father spoke were, 'Keep free—have your hands empty, but clean—take nothing.' So I cannot take anything, even though he gives it."

Hilarion looked at her intently. He did not ask any more. He had the poet's quickness of compassion, and could gather whole facts from fragmentary words.

"No doubt you are right," he said, as though he had heard it all from the beginning. "And why should you go into that vapid and turbulent world that calls itself great? You could only lose. The artist always loses. Society is a crucible in which all gold melts. Out of it are drawn only one of two prizes—vanity or disgust; the perfectly successful in it are like the children that the Chinese imprison in jars from their birth—dwarfs that believe their compressed distortion to be beautiful. Hermes here is a better companion than the world. What do you say, Crispin?"

"I say, let her do as she likes," I answered roughly; for I was angry with his presence there. "I cannot say that she is wrong—no one could say so; but such a trifle I think she might have taken without harm to her pride; and it is hard on Maryx, thinking only to give pleasure, and believing it bad, as it is bad, for her to live alone here, dreaming of broken marbles and dead gods—not that I would speak lightly of either the gods or arts—but such a life is too mournful, and in a little while it will become morbid."

"Better that than the foul gases of crowded rooms and empty compliments. Maryx and you are both at fault, my sensible Lupercus!" said Hilarion, with that smile which so provoked me, his eyes resting on the girl, who herself stood abstracted and sorrowful, the tears still not dry upon her lashes.

"Take them away," she said to Ersilia, with a gesture towards the pretty rejected things. Then she lifted her arms with a little sigh of relief, like one decided to put down a burden. "I do not want to see these people. I see them pass. They

look foolish; they are just the same as when Juvenal wrote about them, I suppose. And what do they want with me?"

"I will tell you what they want," said Hilarion. "Genius scares the world. It is like the silver goblet to Œdipus, telling of vanished greatness and the power of the gods; the world that is like Œdipus, blind and old and heavy with many nameless sins, cannot bear the reproach of it; it wants to stamp it into dust. Never being quite able to do that, it fondles it, fills it with sugared drinks, nails it with golden nails to the board where fools feast. Often the world succeeds, and the goblet falls to baser uses and loses the power to remind the blind sinner any more of the ancient glories and of the dishonoured children of Zeus. Can you understand?—only my allegory halts, as most allegories do. Œdipus was repentant: the world never repents. So I think you are right not to go to it. Keep the silver goblet for yourself, and only touch it with your own lips, since from the gods it came to you."

There was a sort of emotion in his voice as he said the last words. Nor was it affected. In his impulses he was always sincere, and his impulse then was earnest, was tender, and was sorrowful. He himself had let his silver goblet often fall, and be often choked up with the lees of spilled wines and the dust of dead passions.

Her face lightened with a happy smile. It was like remembered music to her to hear this kind of speech. She did not answer in words. She seemed to me to be timid with Hilarion, and to lose that calm, indifferent composure which characterised all her intercourse with other people.

"We are so serious, and you are so young!" said he, shaking off the momentary depression that had fallen on him. "You have lost a night's pleasure, too. We are bound to make you amends. Crispin, you look as dull as Pasquino without a pasted epigram. Wake up! Hermes wonders at you; he thinks that when men's lives are so short as they are, it is astonishing they should spend any of their little measure of time in mere moodiness; and you—you used never to know the meaning of such a word. Now let us see what we can give to Giojà in compensation. I may call you Giojà?"

"Oh, yes; it is my name," she answered him; for the only ways that she had known were the simple ways and habits of the people, and of the ceremonies of polished life she knew nothing, though Nature had taught her grace and that serenit which is the highest form of grace.

"It is a lovely name, and has a lovely meaning," said Hilarion. "Now I have thought—you care for music. Of course you care; music has all the other arts in it, and something that none of them have as well. Will you come and hear some with me? There is my own box always ready, and you can go in your own manner, with your veil if you like, and enjoy it unseen if you please; and Crispino, too, can come. There is the Zauberflöte to-night, and there is no magician like Mozart, though at the best he is poorly rendered here. Come, it will be better for you than the crowds that stare."

"Mozart!"

She had heard some of his music in requiems and masses in the churches; but she had no idea what he spoke of, for she had never been inside a theatre.

"Yes, the Zauberflöte—on the whole, the most perfect music in the world. Of old, the gods came down and whispered their secrets to the poets. You remember Dionysos waking Æschylus amongst the vines, and bidding him go write the Oresteia. Now-a-days the gods only whisper to the musicians; the poets are left to grope their way amongst the cancer hospitals and the charnel-houses. No doubt it is the poets' fault. What we wish to see I suppose we do see—see most of, at all events, after all. Goethe was the last to listen to the god under the vines. 'What beautiful things the vines have said to me!' he wrote from Italy. And yet, let them pretend what they will, Goethe was not a poet; he was too cold and too clear; and, besides, he could live at Weimar! Well, will you come? Trust me; you will be very happy and very unhappy both at once, and is not that the very essence and epitome of life? Not to have heard great music is like having lived without seeing Rome."

"I will come," said Giojà, and looked at me, "if Maryx will not be vexed. Will he be vexed?"

"My dear," I said to her, "he meant to have given you pleasure, and he will find that he has failed, and that another has given it instead. That is all. A very common lot—so common that it needs no pity."

For I was irritated and impatient, and hated Hilarion, though he was doing no harm, but only looking pale and handsome, like any one of the statues that she loved, leaning there underneath Hermes, with the shadows of the coming night about him and his sweet voice coming through the stillness in the fantastic and devious talk which of all other was most certain to enchain her attention by its likeness to her own dreams.

He had his way in the end; he was one of those men who always have their way. She hesitated, and was afraid to pain her absent master, but in the end yielded and went out with him into the night air, which had grown colder and starry, so that already Rome was beginning to look paved with silver and carved with alabaster, as it looks always when the moon shines there.

I followed them as a dog would have done. The horses were there; but the night was beautiful, and they went on, on foot, lingering here and there as the moonlight grew clearer and the shades more black.

Giojà was well used to Rome at night. After sunset, when my labours were done, I often had gone with her through the avenues about the Flavian amphitheatre and the twisting streets whose centre is the mighty dome of Agrippa, or any other of the many quarters familiar to me from my babyhood, and now in my old age eloquent of a million histories. Maryx had gone often with us too. After a long day spent in the studio, it had always been his habit to go about Rome, which he knew by heart, as Ampère knew it, and some of the finest conceptions of his works had come to him sitting in the stillness of the great Thermæ, with only the bats and owls moving between the dull red walls where your northern singer composed his great Prometheus.

I was used to seeing Maryx by her side. It incensed me to watch the graceful head of Hilarion bending to her in his stead; it seemed a wrong to the one who was absent.

It was an ordinary night at the Opera, and the Apollo Theatre was almost empty, and the little light there was burned very low, as it is our economical habit to have it in our playhouses. And, indeed, what music is not sweetest in the softness of the dusk?

To hear music well, sit in twilight and in stillness, only meeting eyes you love. Your new school, which thinks that music needs the assistance of glitter and glare and pictorial effect, sadly insults the divinest of the arts.

The large box close to the stage belonging to Hilarion was all in gloom: I stayed at the back of it, for I would not leave them; and Giojà in her dark clothing no one saw.

She thought it very strange, the large, shadowy, almost empty space in which the first notes of the orchestra only were dully humming; but when the full glory of the music burst

over her, she held her breath, entranced, and one could see her great eyes wide opened and lustrous as the stars.

He did not speak to her, but only watched her. The rendering was in no way fine; but it is impossible for even poor singers utterly to mar the sway of the Zauberflöte; and when the music ceased at the first act, the girl was pale as her own marbles, and the tears were coursing down her cheeks in silence.

"Did I not tell you rightly?" said Hilarion, in his soft, caressing voice. "Are you not most happy and most unhappy?"

She smiled on him a little through her tears.

"It is all the past—it is all the future! I did not know. Oh, why did they never bring me here?"

"I am glad that it was left for me to do," he answered her. "I think Maryx does not care for music. Why do you turn away?"

"I do not want to see the people; they jar on it," said Giojà, meaning the actors on the stage. "Why can they not sing without being seen?"

"I, too, should prefer that," said Hilarion. "But then it would no longer be an opera."

"Would that matter?" said Giojà, who was always indifferent to the great reasoning that because a thing has been so thus it must ever be.

Then she was quiet again and breathless. As for me, she had forgotten that I lived. She had almost forgotten Hilarion, only that now and again her eyes, brilliant through moisture of unshed tears, like any passion-flowers through dew, turned on him as on the giver of her deep delight. He was her Apollo Soranus.

"You are contented?" he murmured softly once.

She answered him as from a dream:—

"It is like Homer!"

She knew no greater comparison; and perhaps there is none greater.

At the close, the passionate music troubled her, and made her colour rise and her breath come and go. Those lovers in the flames, happy merely because together, she did not understand; yet the tumult of emotions disturbed that classic calm in her which made her always so grave, yet so serene.

She did not speak at all when it was over and she had left the dusky, desolate opera-house; nor did Hilarion speak to her. He understood that the melodies were all about her—in the air,

in the stars, in the very voices of the streets; and he let the strange passion of which she had heard the first notes steal on her unawares. He was a master in these things.

We went silently through the Tordinona street, and past the house of Raffaelle, and homeward. Rome was quiet, and all white with the light of a full moon. Now and then a shadowy form went by, touching a guitar; now and then an orange-bough heavy with blossom and fruit swung over a wall in our faces; at one corner there stood a bier, with torches flaring and men praying; some one was dead—some one dies with every moment, they say;—the great melodious fountains sounded everywhere through the night, as though the waters were always striving, striving, striving in vain to wash the crimes of the city away—the endless centuries of crime whose beginning is lost in the dull roll of Tullia's chariot-wheels. Tullia! the vile name!—there is only Tarpeia perhaps viler still. How right the Sabines were when they sent the bronze weight of their shields down on the base beauty of Tarpeia, the creature that first sold Rome!

All these odd, disjointed thoughts went stumbling through my brain as my feet went stumbling home.

It was late.

At the door I would have sent her upstairs alone and sent Hilarion away; but he would not have it so, and he was a man that always had his way.

"Let us see her safe back to Hermes," he said.

And when we reached Hermes I saw why he had chosen to do that. In our absence his orders had arranged a surprise for her. A fire burnt on the hearth; there was a little supper spread; there were many flowers; there was only the old bronze lamp set burning; through the unshuttered and grated casement all the moonlit brilliancy of the river was visible.

Giojà gave a little cry of pleasure and of wonder. Maryx had encompassed her with every solid care that strength and nobleness could give; but he did not think of such little things as this. Scenic display was not in his temperament.

"This is folly. It is midnight. She eats nothing at this hour. She has to be up at dawn," I grumbled, feeling stupid and ill at ease and angry.

Hilarion laughed at me.

His own way he would have. He was so gay, so gracious, so charming, so kindly, it was impossible to altogether withstand him; and, after all, what harm had he done?

Yet eat I could not, and drink I would not. But if I would be a killjoy, it made no difference to him; it was not for me that his peaches showed their bloom like infants' cheeks, nor for me that his tea-roses clustered round his starry asters.

He had his way, sitting within the broad mellow glow from the hearth-fire, with the great moon looking in through the iron bars, sailing in a silvery radiance of snowy cloud.

She said but little—very little; but I felt that if I had asked her now if she were only content, she would have answered, "I am happy."

Once she got up, and took a little book and gave it to him.

"Read me something—once."

It was my odd volume of his translated sonnets.

He smiled, and was silent, looking on her face with a dreamy pleasure of contemplation. Then he did read, his memory awakening and the volume closing in his hand, as he read.

What he chose was a fragment of a poem on Sospitra, the woman who, being visited by spirits in the guise of two Chaldeans, was dowered by them with transcendent powers and superhuman knowledge, and was enabled to behold at once all the deeds that were done in all lands beneath the sun, and was raised high above all human woes and human frailties;—save only Love and Death.

Save only Love and Death.

It was a great poem, the greatest that he had ever given to the world, and perhaps the most terrible.

For in it was all the despair of genius, and all the derision of hell.

The woman dwelt alone with the stars and the palms and the falling waters, and was tranquil and proud and at peace· and when night fell, saw all the darkened earth outspread before her as a scroll, and read the hidden souls of millions, and knew all that the day had seen done; and the lion lay at her feet, and the wild antelope came to hei will, and the eagle told her the secret ways of the planets, and the nightingale sang to her of lovers smiling in their sleep, and she was equal to the gods in knowledge and in vision, and was content.

Then one day a tired wanderer came and asked her for a draught of water to slake his thirst and lave his wounds. And she gave it, and giving it, touched his hand; and one by one the magic gifts fell from her, and the Chaldeans came no more.

In all the vastness of the universe she only hearkened for one

voice; and her eyes were blind to earth and heaven, for they only sought one face; and she had power no more over the minds of men, or the creatures of land and air, for she had cast her crown down in the dust, and had become a slave; and her slavery was sweeter than had ever been her strength.

Sweeter far—for a space.

Then the wanderer, his wounds being healed and his thirst slaked, wearied, and arose and passed away; and she was left alone in the silence of the desert. But never more came the Chaldeans.

When the last words died on the silence, the silence remained unbroken. One could hear the lapping of the river against the piles of the bridge, and the sound of the little flames eating the wood away upon the hearth.

Hilarion at length rose abruptly.

"Good night, and the Chaldeans be with you!" he said; and touched the soft loose locks on her forehead with a familiarity of gesture that not I or Maryx had ever offered to her.

Giojà did not move; her face was rapt, pale, troubled, infinitely tender; she looked up at him and said nothing.

"This is how you keep your promise!" I said faintly, on the stairs; and then paused—for he had made no promise.

Hilarion smiled.

"I would not make any. I never make any. We are all too much the playthings of accident to be able to say 'I will,' or 'I will not.' And what have I done? Is there harm in the Zauberflöte?"

"You are more cruel than the Chaldeans," I said. "They at least did not call the destroyers."

Hilarion went out into the night air.

"I hardly know why I read her the poem," he said, almost regretfully; "it was a pity, perhaps; of love, believe me, I have had more than enough; and besides," he added, with a laugh that I did not like, "besides, there is Maryx!"

Then he went away down the darkness of the Via Pettinari, the feet of his horses, wearied with waiting, ringing sharply on the stones.

He went to his duchess whom he more than half hated; yet with whom he would not break his unholy relation, because she had that flame in her eyes, and that flint in her heart, at which men whose passions are worn out are glad to strive to rekindle them.

CHAPTER XV.

WITH the morning, Giojà went up as usual to the studio. Maryx was leaning over the balustrade of his terrace, as his habit often was in that lovely time of the clear early morning, when there are still mists hovering about the curving ways of Tiber; yet every spire, and tower, and ruined glory stands out distinct in all their varied architecture against the radiant sky.

Maryx advanced to her, and met her.

"My dear, why did you change your mind last night? Was it not sudden?"

"Yes, it was sudden," she answered him. "When I saw the things, then I remembered I could not buy them; I would not wear them. It was good of you; so good; were you vexed?"

Maryx's changeful eyes darkened, and grew dimmer. He gave an angry gesture.

"Such a little thing! Had you not faith enough in me for that? Am I so little your friend after all this time? I, who am your master?"

Giojà was silent. Then she took his hand and touched it with her lips.

"You are more than my friend, and if to serve you I had to hurt myself—that I would do. But this was different; it would have done you no good, and it would have made me ashamed."

He coloured slightly, and his eyes grew soft; he drew away his hand with a sort of impatient confusion.

"God forbid that you should be ashamed—for me! But to refuse such a mere trifle; it looks like distrust of me."

"How could I distrust you?"

She looked in his face whilst she spoke, with the sweet, open seriousness of a young child.

"How could I distrust you—distrust *you!*" she repeated, as he remained silent. "I do not know what you can mean. But I did not wish for those rich things, and I did not wish to go at all."

Maryx smiled, re-assured.

"If you did not wish to go, my dear, that is another matter. I think you are very wise. The artist loses more by the world than ever he gains from it. It was only that since it opened to you, I thought it right you should have the choice. But I was disappointed a little, I admit; I had looked forward to seeing you move in those great rooms as no girl can move except one like you, whom the sea has made strong, and the trammels of fashion never have fettered; only to see you walk would be despair to them!—but I am content now that you chose as you did; quite content; only you must promise me to keep my poor Etruscan gold. I should have told you so last night, but when I called for you, thinking to find you ready, you were in bed, your window was all dark."

"But did not Ersilia tell you?"

"Tell me what? Yes. She put her head out of her own casement, and called that you would not touch the clothes nor go; and then she slammed the window to again, and I got no more from her. What did you bid her say?"

"Nothing—I forgot."

"Forgot to leave a pretty message for me to soften the rejection?" said Maryx, with a smile. "Well, never mind, my dear. Soft words passing by that good soul's mouth would harden in the passage. Did you sleep well, young philosopher? —pagan though you are, I begin to think you have something of the early Christians in you after all; of S. Ursula, or S. Dorothea."

Giojà flushed scarlet; then grew pale.

"I did not sleep; I was not at home; I went with him, and he came back with me."

Maryx, leaning carelessly over the terrace parapet, casting the fallen flowers of the jessamines into the gulf of cactus and aloes below, raised himself erect with sudden quickness, and gazed at her.

"With whom? with what? Went where?—of what are you talking?"

"Him!"

"Who!"

"I went with him," she answered, very low, vaguely conscious that he grew angered, and that she had done ill. "It was to the music of Mozart. Why did you never take me? I seemed to understand everything in all the world: all that was dark

grew clear; I understood why the woman did not feel the flames, nor have any fear of death; then he came back with me, and he had made the room like a garden, and Hermes was covered with roses, and it was very late, and he read to me his own poems, and the one on Sospitra, whom the Chaldean seers raised above every sorrow except death and love——"

She stopped abruptly at that word; no doubt she could not have told why.

Maryx was silent. He looked like a man who had received a blow, and a blow that his manliness forbade him to return.

His lips parted to speak, but whatever he was about to say, he controlled its utterance.

"Go in to your work, my dear," he said, after a pause. "It grows late."

That was all. Giojà looked at him with a hesitating regret.

"Are you displeased?" she asked him, as she lingered. But he had left her, and had come down amongst the aloes, and thus met me, as I ascended the steep slopes of his gardens.

"She was with Hilarion?" he said, abruptly.

"Yes, but there was no harm in that," I answered him, and told him how the night had been spent.

He heard, looking far away from me towards the great pile of the Farnese glowing like bronze and gold in the morning light.

There was a great pain upon his face, but he said nothing; he was too generous to blame a creature owing so much to him as she did; and Maryx, so eloquent on matters of his art, and so felicitous in discussion and disquisition, was of few words when he felt deeply.

"So long as she had some change and pleasantness, it is not much matter who gave it," he said, at length, when I had ended. "No doubt he knows how to amuse women better than I do. For the rest, we are not her keepers—you and I."

Then he moved to go on away down his gardens, towards Rome.

"You are not going back to the studio?" I ventured to say, for it was his practice always to spend there the hours of the forenoon, at the least.

"No; I have business yonder," he made answer; and I lost him to sight in the windings of the cypress alley that shelved sharply downward.

I understood that he did not wish me to go with him then;

he had been wounded, and like all other noble animals, sought to be alone.

I went up into his house, where I was always free to wander as I liked; it was beautifully still; the warm sun shone into the open courts; on the marble floors his great hounds lay at rest; the creepers were red with the touch of winter; through the white columns and porphyry arches there was a golden glory of chrysanthemums; it seemed the abode of perfect peace.

I went into the workrooms where the blocks of marble were standing, and the scale stones, and the iron skeletons to hold the clay; and the workers were labouring under the guidance of the old foreman, Giulio.

Giojà was already at her own work before the plane on which she of late had been modelling in alto relievo.

He had let her choose her own subject, and she had chosen the death of Penthesileia: the fair daughter of Arês lay at the feet of Achilles, her helmet off, her long tresses sweeping this cruel earth that drank her blood; Thersites stood by, on his face the laughter that would cost him life; the Hero bent above her; in the rear were the press and tumult of armed men, the shock of shivered spears, the disarray of startled horses; and farther yet, the distant walls of Troy.

The clay seemed sentient and alive; the whole composition was full of invention and of beauty; and the prominent recumbent figure of Penthesileia, in the drooping flexible abandonment of death, would scarcely have been unworthy of that Greek of the North, your Flaxman.

How great is the sorcery of Art; how mean and how feeble beside it are the astrologers and magicians of mere necromancy!

A little washed earth spread out upon a board and touched by the hand of genius; and lo! the wars of Homer are fought before your eyes, and life and death, and woman's loveliness, and the valour of man, and the very sound of battle, and the very sight of tears, are all in that grey clay!

I looked over her shoulder at her work. I had seen it in its various stages many times; it was now almost complete.

"My dear," I said to her, saying what I thought, "you have that Aaron's wand, which from the bare rods can call forth almond flowers. Be content. Whoever has that, has so much, that if life treat him unkindly in other ways, he can well afford to bear it."

Giojà sighed a little restlessly; leaning her face upon her

hands, and looking down upon the plane on which her Penthesileia lay.

"Is it good?" she said, doubtfully. "Yesterday I thought so; I was so glad in it; but now——"

"Well?—now?"

"I do not care for it. Who can say in a world of marble what he can say in two lines of his Sospitra?"

Her eyes were full of tears; she had no pleasure in her noble Homeric labour; she could not have told why.

"Sospitra be accursed, and he who wrote it!" I muttered in my throat.

"You place the poet highest of all artists," I said aloud, with such patience as I could assume. "Well, very likely you are right. He interprets the passions, the aspirations, the pains, and the gladness of living—what we call the soul—more directly, and of course with much more research and intimacy, than any other artist can do. The sculptor and the painter can but deal with the outward expression of emotion, and with Nature in her visible and tangible forms. The singer, the reciter, in every nation, from Hellas to Scandinavia, was the earliest inspired; his were the first notes heard in the dusk of the world's slow dawn. It is natural that supremacy remains with him. But this is finished. What do you do to-day?"

She lifted her hair off her forehead—thick, clustering soft hair, that was a weight to her small head.

"I do not know; I am tired; is Maryx angry with me, that he does not come?'

"He is gone into Rome. No. He is not angry; perhaps he is pained."

"I am sorry."

"You see he meant to give you pleasure, and he failed, and another succeeded. A small thing perhaps; still a man may be wounded."

"I wonder if he would think this good?" she murmured, her eyes still on her Penthesileia. "Do you think he would see any strength or beauty in it at all?"

"Maryx! But surely you must know! He never says what he does not think, nor ever stoops to give you mere flattery."

"I did not mean Maryx," she said, and then she turned away, and went to a desk in an inner room, and began to translate the legendary portions of Pausanias relating to Endœus; a kind of employment which her master had given her

to change at intervals the posture and the position of work at the clay, which he thought were not good too long together, for one of her sex, and one so young.

I let her alone; it was of no use to speak; I went and talked a little to the old woman who sat in her wooden shoes in the beautiful chambers, and who looked out over Rome, and wished she were hoeing in a cabbage plot.

"Is the girl here to-day?" asked the mother of Maryx. "Ah! She has not been to see me this morning."

"Does she always come?"

"Always. We manage to understand each other. Not very much; but enough. It is good to look at her; it is like seeing the vines in flower."

"Shall I call her here?"

"No. Let her be. Perhaps Germain wants her."

"You have grown to like her?"

"Yes; one likes what is young. And then she is very fair to look at; a fair face is so much; it was hard in the good God to make so many faces ugly; to be born ugly—that is, to enter the world with a hobble at your foot—at least, when you are a woman. Will my son marry her, think you?"

"I cannot tell. Who has thought of it?"

"No one. Only myself. But a man and a girl—that is how it always ends; and he is not quite young, but he is so noble to look at, and so good and so great. I think that is how it will end. And why not? It would be better for him—something living—than those marble women that he worships. You see he is very great and famous, and all that, but there is no one to watch for his coming and look the brighter because he comes. And a man wants that. I am his mother indeed. But that is not much, because I am very stupid, and cannot understand what he talks of, nor the things he does, and all the use that I could be—to sew, to darn, to sweep, to make the soup—that he does not want, because he is so great, and can live as the princes do. All the world admires him and honours him—oh yes—but then, at home, he is all alone. But do not say a word—not a word. Love is not like a bean plant; you cannot put it in where you wish and train it where you like. If it grows, it grows, and it is God or the devil who sets it there: may the saints forgive me!"

Then she folded her hands, and began telling her beads a little, quiet, brown figure, like a winter leaf, amidst the

splendours of the room, with her wooden shoes sunk in the thick eastern carpets, and the leaden effigy of the Madonna that she had bought for a copper at a fair in her girlhood, still hung round her throat as more precious than pearls.

She was a good soul; she would have taken to her heart any creature that her son had loved, or that had loved him; she was old, and ignorant, and stupid, as she said, but she was upright and just, and what was pure, that she thought worthy. The greatness of her son she could not comprehend, and of his works and of his genius she was afraid—not understanding them; but she would have understood if she had seen him happy with the simple common joys of innocent affection.

"But I am fearful; yes, I am fearful," she murmured, with her hands clasped together. "Because, you see, he has been good to her, very good; and my life has been long, and never yet did I see a great benefit done but what, in time, it came back as a curse. The good God has ordered it so that we may not do what is right just for sake of reward."

Then she told her beads, unwitting of the terrible irony she had uttered.

I left her sorrowfully, and went down the hill past the bright Pauline water, down the old Aurelian Way, to my stall by Ponte Sisto for the labours of the day.

A sorrowful constraint fell upon us all after that morning, and marred the happy, unstrained intercourse with which our time had gone by so pleasantly. Maryx said nothing, and nothing was altered in Giojà's mode of life, but still there was a change; there was that "little rift in the wood," which, with the coming of a storm, strikes down the tree.

For me I sat and stitched in the driving of the winds which began to grow very chill, and the neighbours round said that I had become churlish.

One is so often thought to be sullen when one is only sad. Anxiety is a sorry bedfellow, and when one rises in the morning he has chilled us for the day.

Palès snapped at her cats, and worried them, and gambolled before her lovers, and growled at them, and said, as plainly as her sharp black nose and fox's eyes could speak to me, "Why not come away to the Falcone and eat a bit of porcupine, and enjoy yourself as you used to do, and never trouble your head?"

But I would not adopt her philosophy, even though Fortune did so favour me at that time, that in a roll of old vellum I

bought to cut up for shoe linings, I actually found a fragment of a manuscript of a Tractatus in Mattheum of S. Hieronimus, written by an Italian scribe, and with some of the floreated borders still visible.

"Your lot should have been cast in those times, Crispin," said Hilarion, who saw it, and would have given me a roll of bank notes for it, if I would have taken them. "What a monk you would have made! I think I see you—spelling out the Greek manuscripts, collecting miniatures for the library Gospels, keeping an eye on the wines in the buttery, tending the artichoke and the sweet herbs, talking to Erasmus in Latin when he passed your way, and getting all the artists that had work in the chapel to do something or another for your cell, which would have been sure to have had a painted window and a vine climbing about the window. You were meant for a sixteenth-century monk. There is no greater hardship than to be born in an age that is too late for us."

But I could not jest with him, for he had come down from the house on the bridge in that hour of dusk when Giojà's studies were over. It was worse than useless to object in any way; he would only have laughed: and after all, as Maryx had said, we were not her keepers, and how could we insult him by saying that he should not approach her?

"Have you seen her Penthesileia?" I asked him.

"At the studio? Yes."

"And what do you think of it?"

"It is wonderful; like everything that Maryx does; entirely noble, and pure, and classic."

"Maryx! He had no hand in it; he never touched it! Unaided she composed and executed every line of it! What are you thinking of?"

"My dear Lupercus, that is no woman's work—and a girl's too—a mere child's? How can you believe it?"

"I believe it, as I believe in the sun that hangs in the heavens!" I said savagely, and feeling ready to strike him. "What! a man all truth and candour, and a girl who is truth itself, conspire to thrust a lie upon us like that?—the very idea is an infamy. I tell you it is as utterly her own as the stitches in this shoe that I have stitched are mine!"

"You excite yourself; and I meant no infamy at all. Only, of course, it is Maryx's brain that has guided her hand everywhere; what shame is there in that? It is an impossible

work for a girl of her years to have conceived and executed alone."

"Have you told her so?"

"Of course not. I never tell truth to any woman, and she has genius of her own, no doubt; more is the pity."

"The pity? And you are a poet?"

"Am I? The world has said so, but I have been very doubtful all my days."

And indeed he was so with reason, for though he had a magical power of magnificent versification, and a classical grace of structure that amazed and awed his age, he was in no sense a poet, for he had no faith, and he derided love.

"Tell her what you have told me of the Penthesileia, and she will hate you," I said to him.

"Will she?" said he, with a little smile. "Tell her, then, if you like."

I went a little later and found her; there were some logs on the hearth, and she sat dreaming before them, drawing lines in the embers with a charred stick. Her face was flushed, her eyes were abstracted and humid.

I had never before found her losing time, doing nothing; she to whom the past was so full of inexhaustible riches, and the future so open for all accomplishments, that study was to her as their playtime to children, and their love tryst to other maidens.

"He says that you did not do your Penthesileia," I said to her abruptly. "Hilarion says so. He is certain that it is the work of Maryx."

She coloured, and shrank a little as if in pain.

"He is wrong," she said, simply. "But it is natural he should think so, and what merit there is in it must of course be most due to my master—that is quite true."

I felt my blood boil in my veins, for I knew that she shrouded her own pain in that patience, because she would not acknowledge that this stranger who misjudged her, was cruel.

"I see you will be only a woman, my dear," I said, bitterly. "I thought you were something above your sex—aloof from it—born for art and nothing else, a very offspring of the gods you love. But I see you will be only a woman after all."

"Why do you say that?"

"Because you suffer wrong, misjudgment, and even insult, in patience, when you like the giver of them."

She looked thoughtfully into the red embers on the hearth; her face was troubled.

"If he knew me better he would not doubt me at all. It is not his fault. I think he has lived with false people. But he ought not to doubt Maryx; he has known him so long, and Maryx could not lie. But I dare say he only says it to try me."

"And you forgive that?"

She was silent a moment.

"There is nothing to forgive," she said, after a little. "It must be such pain to him to doubt so much—if he do really doubt. I suppose that is what you meant by the snakes of Heine."

"You have a noble soul, my dear."

She opened her grave soft eyes on me in surprise. She would have understood praise of her Penthesileia, but she did not understand it of herself.

I left her in the dull glow of the wood ashes, with the tawny-coloured sunset of the winter's eve shining behind the iron bars of the casement, and tinging the Pentelic marble of the Hermes to pale gold. When I had got half-way down the stairs, she came after me.

"Do you think he does really disbelieve?"

"He disbelieves everything; it is a habit; many men are like that who have been spoiled by Fortune. What does it matter?"

"But if I did some greater thing? Something the world called great; he would believe then?"

"My child, go on with your noble fancies without caring whether he have faith or good faith, or neither; Hilarion will always say some gracious thing to you; some captious thing of you to another; in his world, sincerity is rusticity; what does it matter? The artist should never heed any one individual opinion; to do so is to be narrowed at once; if you must have any one in especial, have that of Maryx alone: a great master and a just judge."

She did not seem to hear, her eyes glistened in the yellow light of the Madonna's lamp.

"I will do something greater, very great; then he must believe," she said, low to herself; and I could see her heart was heaving fast.

"As great as you like; but for yourself, not for Hilarion, or for any man," I said to her. "If your likeness in Borghese had

kept the clue and the sword in her own hands, she never had been stranded on the rocks of Dia. Remember that."

But she did not heed me; her eyes had got in them a far-away gaze, and her young face grew resolute and heroic.

"If I had the clue and the sword," she said softly, "I would guide him through the maze of doubt, and I would kill the snakes about his feet."

I bade her good night; she had no more than ever any thoughts of human love; he was to her Apollo Soranus; that was all. What else but harm could I have done by shaking her awake, and bidding her beware? This might be only a dream the more—and so fade.

"If only he would go away!" I said to Palès and the Faun in the fountain.

But it was the cool crisp beginning of winter, with all the shades of purple on the hills, where the grasses and flowers had died, and the virgin snow upon Soracte, and the cyclamen in the hollows where the buried cities lay; and in winter and spring Hilarion loved Rome, even if he had ceased to love his duchess, with the broad imperial eyes; ceased such love as alone he knew, worshipping the false gods of Apatê and Philotès.

"Does she hate me?" said he that day, with a smile in his calm blue eyes; eyes that had so much light in them, and so little warmth.

"No. She is only sorry for you," I said, bluntly. "Sorry that you have the pain of doubt, and the meanness of it; nay, *she* did not say that last word—that is mine. Do you understand a great soul, great writer that you are, and vivisector of men and of women? There is not very often one in this world, but there is one up yonder where that lamp burns under my Hermes."

Hilarion was silent.

One might almost have said he was ashamed.

He bade me good night gently, and did not go up towards the bridge; he would take rough words with sweet temper, and own a truth that went against himself; these were amongst those gracious things with which Nature had made him, and which the world and its adulation, and his own contemptuous temper, had not uprooted.

"If only he would but go away!" I said to Palès and the Faun in the fountain.

CHAPTER XVI.

"My son," said his mother to Maryx, one day, in the twilight, "is not the girl changed? She comes so little to me; and why do you never read to her in the evening time, as last winter you did? I did not understand the words, but it had a fine sound; I liked to listen to it."

"She is a year older," said Maryx, "and do the same things ever please long?"

"Fools—no. But she is not foolish; she cannot be fickle, I think. Do you ask her to come?"

"She does as she likes best. She knows that she is always welcome."

"And what does she do instead?"

"She sits at home, in her room, and studies."

The old woman spun on at her wheel; she was remembering the days of her youth.

"Is there no one there?" she said, sharply. "Is there a youth—a student? any one young as she is?"

"Not that I know of:—No."

"There must be some one, or else—— Germain, you are a great man, and wise, and go your own ways; but maybe you turn your back on happiness. I have heard that wise people often do that. They look up so at the sun and the stars, that they set their foot on the lark that would have sung to them and woke them brightly in the morning—and kill it. Are you like that, my son?"

He changed colour.

"What do you mean?"

"I mean this," said his mother, ceasing to spin, and looking up at him in the firelight. "Why do you let the girl escape you? Why do you not marry her?"

His proud brows bent together, and grew warm.

"Why say such things to me? Do you think——"

"Yes. I think that you have some love for her; perhaps you do not know it;—very well."

Maryx was silent, communing with his own heart.

"If I did," he said slowly and sadly, at length, neither denying nor affirming, "that would not be enough; she has no thought of me; no thought at all, except as her master."

"That you cannot tell," said his mother, simply. "The heart of a girl—that is as a rose still shut up—if it be too much frozen it never opens at all. Look you, Germain, you have been so busied with your marble women, and those vile living things that bare themselves before you, that you have not thought perhaps; but I remember what girls were. I was a girl so long, long ago, down there in the old village, washing my linen in the brook, and seeing your father come through the colza and the rose-fields. Oh, yes! I can remember, and this I can tell you—women are poor things; they are like swallows numbed in the winter; the hand that warms them, and lifts them up, puts them in the breast without trouble. If you would be loved of a woman, give her the warmth of love; she will be roused, and tremble a bit, and perhaps try to get away, but she will be like the numbed swallow—if you close your hand fast she is yours. Most women love love, and not the lover. Take my word!"

Maryx had grown very pale. He smiled a little.

"For shame, mother! That is what the wanton Pauline Venus said in Crispin's dream in Borghese. And if it be not ourselves, but only the passion that is loved, where is the worth of such love?"

"Nay, if you begin to question, I get stupid. I keep to the thing I say. I know what I mean. She is asleep. He who wakes her, him will she cling to; there is an old song that says that in our country. Why not be the one? She has a great heart, though it is all shut up, and silent."

Maryx made no answer.

"Why are bad men the men that women love the most?" muttered his mother to the distaff, her mind plunging into a depth of recollection, and stirring it dully. "Only because they are foremost, because they have no modesty, because they burn women up in their fires—as the children burn up the locusts in summer nights. Oh, I have not forgotten what I used to see, and to hear. Why let another come up with the lighted tow, while you stand by, and say nothing?"

"Because it would be base to say anything," he answered her, suddenly, lifting his bent head, and with a sternness in his voice that his mother had never heard. "Do you not see? she

is friendless, and without money or a home. She has a great talent; nay, a great genius; she depends on me for all the means of making her what she may be, what she will be, as a true artist in the years to come; were she to cease to come to me now, it would be impossible to measure what her loss might not be by broken studies and unaided effort. Do you not see? She can take everything from me now with no thought, and no sort of shame; she can come to me in all her difficulties as a child to a father; she can do here what it is easy for us to make her believe is student's labour worthy of its wage; it is an innocent deception—she was so proud, one was obliged to lead her thus a little astray. Do you not see?—if I approach her as a lover, all that is over. She does not care for me—not in that way: and how can I seek to know whether she ever would, since if I speak words of love to her, and they revolt her, she is scared away from here, and loses all guidance and all aid. Do you not see? I am not free. Speaking to her as you would have me, I should but seem a creditor demanding payment. I cannot be so mean as that. Granted that she is as the frost-numbed swallow that you think of, it is not for me, since I have sheltered her, to say, 'be all my own, or else I cast you forth;' and it would be to say that, since what woman, however young or unsuspecting, could remain under the roof of a lover she repulsed? Love is not born from benefits, and must not be claimed by them."

His mother looked up at him, as he spoke, impetuously and almost fiercely, in the common tongue of their native province.

"You are a good man, Germain," she said, humbly, with the tears in her old dim eyes. "A better man than your mother is a woman. For if she be deaf to you, if she be as a stone to your greatness and your generosity, I would say let her be cast forth, and come to misery as she may, for she will merit it. Yes, that is what I would say, and there is no evil that I would not do to her; the saints above forgive me!"

"Hush!" said Maryx, with a sad smile, that broke through the sternness and pain upon his face. "That is because you think too well of me, and set too great a store on me. It would be very base in us to claim her merely because we befriend her. The very savages leave free their guests, once having sheltered them. Besides, she is not as other maidens are; she has a great genius in her; that at least must be sacred, to me above all other men. Could I do wrong to her, I would not do wrong to that. What should I be? A high-priest dishonouring his own altar!"

His mother was silent. Her lower and duller mind could not attain the nobility of his, but she honoured it, and did not oppose it. Only she muttered rather to herself than him:

"Your talk of what you call genius, that I do not understand; and if it bring hardness of heart, then it is an accursed thing and abominable; and as for making stone images—that is not woman's work. She is seventeen years old, and fair as a flower, instead of shaping stone, and hanging over it, and setting all her soul on it, she should be seeing her own eyes in a living child's face, and feeling its little wet mouth at her breast. What would she care for her marble things then?"

Maryx stood by the fireplace; his face was in shadow; all that his mother had said to him had stirred his heart painfully, and showed him in naked truth what he had striven to put away from him, and had refused to dwell upon, even in his innermost thoughts.

"Good night," he said at last, arousing from his silence. "I must go to the Vatican. I have promised Antonelli. Never speak of this any more. It is useless, and it pains me."

"But is it impossible——?"

His face changed, and his olive cheek grew paler and then warm again.

"I think so—yes. But who knows? Perhaps some time—but yet,—no gift that was not a free gift to me would I ever take. I could better go unloved all my life than be offered a passionless pale mistress, yielded from gratitude and given up without joy as the payment of debt. *That* were a hell indeed!"

Then he bent his head to her farewell, and went out to go to the great Cardinal. His way lay through the room where Giojà was used to work.

There was a single lamp burning. He paused and looked at the Penthesileia. The tears came into his eyes for the first time since the day that, starving and friendless and wretched, he had won the Prize of Rome in his youth.

The high desk was near, with the Greek and Latin volumes, and the loose sheets of her translations from them, and the goosequills that she had written with, and the glass that she had filled with heliotrope and myrtle to be near her as she wrote.

He touched them all with his hand caressingly.

"Ah, my dear! how safe you would be with me!" he murmured half aloud.

Then he went out; but as he went, the whiteness of a marble figure barred his way.

A sickly sense of impatience passed over him as he turned to avoid it in his passage to the door and glanced upward at the lamp-illumined face, which was that of the Apollo Citharœdus—the face of Hilarion.

CHAPTER XVII.

LITTLE almond-eyed Greek Amphion came often, with his flute in the pocket of his vest, to the house upon the bridge; and he played to her, but she ceased to recite to him.

"He does not feel it; what is the use?" she said. But of his melodies she was never tired, and he was never tired of playing them.

She would sit by the embers of the hearthfire and listen with half-closed eyes. The boy was no more to her than a chorister or a nightingale; less, for the nightingale she would have ever imagined to be the sorrowful mother of Itys, and so would have cherished it.

She grew dreamier than of old, she studied less, she passed far fewer hours in the studio.

One day Maryx found her with her head resting on her arms beside a plane on which the wet clay was spread out, awaiting her compositions. When she lifted her head, her eyes were heavy with tears.

"What use is it to create anything?" she said, before he could speak. "He would always think that I did not do it."

Maryx turned away from her without a word.

Then a little later she took up work with eager energy and feverish ambition, for she had become changeable and uncertain; she, the equable, meditative, deep-souled young muse who had been so indifferent and so serene, thinking that nothing mattered much, since there were Art and Rome.

As for Hilarion, who had dropped this poison of unrest into her heart, I seldom saw him. I never found him in her room.

Ersilia told me that he went sometimes at noonday or at twilight, and no doubt it was so; but for some weeks I never saw him there. I had to be busy in the days; for light was short, and as the last week of the Carnival drew near, all the lads and lasses of my quarter came to me to be shod afresh for the tarantella and the masque; and Palès had to eat, and I, and there was no longer that little store of money in the cupboard in the wall; and when I saw a bit of black-letter manuscript, or a rusty gem, or a fragment of old marble turned up from under the share, I had to look the other way, and could not even think of them.

One day when I was there Maryx found her again sitting beside her untouched works, with one hand buried in the clusters of her hair, and her face hung, in a very ecstasy of adoration, over the open pages of a volume. It was the volume which contained the poem of Sospitra.

Maryx went and looked over her shoulder, and read also, she not hearing or perceiving him. I had come to accompany her homeward over the bridge; for it was near six of the evening, and the vespers were being said and sung in all the million churches of our Rome.

His face grew dark as he read. He touched her, and she looked up. Her eyes had a soft moisture in them, languid and lovely, and her cheeks were flushed.

"You have forsaken Homer!" he said, abruptly. "He is the finer teacher. Go back to him."

She was silent. She seemed still in a dream.

Maryx shut the volume of the Sospitra with a gesture as though he had touched some noxious fruit.

"Those verses that you wander in," he said, roughly, "are like our Roman woods in midsummer—glades of flowering luxuriance whose soil is vile from putrefaction, and whose sunset glories are fever and delirium and death. Come out from them and walk as you used to love to walk in the old Homeric temples, where you learn the excellence of strength and patience and the mysteries of gods. You waste your time and you misuse your gifts, hanging on that persuasive sorcery of words that has no single good or great thing that it can tell you of, but only stories of fever and decay."

She seemed to awaken from her dream and listen to him with an effort. She took the volume tenderly from where he had pushed it.

"You are unjust," she said; "and I think you do not understand."

Then I saw that she flushed hotly again, and I thought to myself that, alas! alas! she had begun to understand only too well the lessons of that fatal book—fatal and fateful as Francesca's.

The face of her master flushed hotly too.

"Perhaps I am unjust," he said, abruptly. "But I think not. I would say to him what I say to you. He is no poet:—Hilarion. He is a singer of songs, and his heart is cold, and his passion is vileness, and his life knows neither sorrow nor shame. When he sings to them, men and women listen, and their ears are lulled, but their souls are withered, and they go away faint and full of fever. He is your Apollo Soranus; he has the lyre, indeed, in his hands, but the snakes are about his feet. Why will you listen?"

His eyes grew wistful and full of entreaty; his voice lost its contemptuous anger, and had in it a pathetic pleading. She did not speak, but she held the volume to her, and her face did not lose its resolute coldness.

This silence in her stung him into sharper pain and more bitter earnestness.

"You have loved Art. Is it Art only to see the canker in the rose, the worm in the fruit, the cancer in the breast, and let all freshness and all loveliness go by uncounted? Would you go to the pestilence ward to model your Hebe, to the ulcered beggar to mould your Herakles? Yet that is what he does. Art, if it be anything, is the perpetual uplifting of what is beautiful in the sight of the multitudes—the perpetual adoration of that loveliness, material and moral, which men in the haste and the greed of their lives are everlastingly forgetting; unless it be that, it is empty and useless as a child's reed-pipe when the reed is snapt and the child's breath spent. Genius is obligation. Will you be faithless to that great canon? The writings of Hilarion will poison your genius, for they will embitter it with doubt and corrupt it with evil teaching. I will not say that as your master I forbid, but I do say that, as your friend, I beseech you to resist his influence. Bid him come here, and I will say the same to him."

"You are unjust; he is a great poet," she said simply again; and her face did not change, and she turned to move away, her hands still clasping the book. She was cold to the eager and

ardent supplication of his gaze and his voice; for indeed there is nothing on earth so cold as is a woman who loves, to all things outside her love; and this love was in her then, though we knew it not.

Something in that indifferent and tranquil resolution fell on the heart of Maryx as ice falls on fire. The blood burned in his face, and his eyes lit with an ungovernable rage. With a sudden and uncontrollable gesture, he caught the book from her hands, and with an oath he dashed the volume to the ground. His face was dark with furious scorn.

"Do you call him a poet because he has the trick of a sonorous cadence and of words that fall with the measure of music, so that youths and maidens recite them for the vain charm of their mere empty sound? It is a lie—it is a blasphemy. A poet! A poet suffers for the meanest thing that lives; the feeblest creature dead in the dust is pain to him; his joy and his sorrow alike outweigh tenfold the joys and the sorrows of men; he looks on the world as Christ looked on Jerusalem, and weeps; he loves, and all heaven and all hell are in his love; he is faithful unto death, because fidelity alone can give to love the grandeur and the promise of eternity; he is like the martyrs of the Church who lay upon the wheel with their limbs racked, yet held the roses of Paradise in their hands and heard the angels in the air. That is a poet; that is what Dante was, and Shelley and Milton and Petrarca. But this man? this singer of the senses, whose sole lament is that the appetites of the body are too soon exhausted? this languid and curious analyst who rends the soul aside with merciless cruelty, and puts away the quivering nerves with cold indifference, once he has seen their secrets? —this a poet? Then so was Nero harping! Accursed be the book and all the polished vileness that his verses ever palmed off on men by their mere tricks of sound. This a poet! As soon are the swine that rout the garbage, the lions of the Apocalypse by the throne of God!"

The passionate eloquence natural to him shook him now, as an oak-tree is shaken by a storm. The scorn and the hate that were in him poured forth their fury on the printed thing, as on an emblem and offspring of the man by whom it had been begotten. He thought that it was the false genius which he cursed; in truth, it was the faithless passion that he foreboded.

Giojà listened, and her young face grew stern as that of the Athene Promachos; the lines of her mouth curved with a silent

severity of pain and wrath. She took the book up from the floor of the room, and held it with clasped hands to her bosom.

"You are unjust," she said simply; and said no more.

Maryx stood silent and breathless, like a man exhausted from some bodily conflict. His breast heaved, and his face grew very pale.

"I was too violent; I insulted you; forgive me," he muttered very low. "My dear—I forgot myself—will you forgive me and put your hand in mine?"

She looked at him with a look that was almost cruel, so unforgiving and so unresponsive as it was.

"You are my master, and have been my friend, other wise——" she said, slowly, and held out her hand slowly, as she paused.

But he motioned her from him with an irrepressible gesture of passionate pain.

"If only *so*—better never," he said, hoarsely. "Leave me unpardoned then. I claim no debts by force."

And he turned and went out of the chamber, and I heard his swift, firm step echoing over the marble pavement of the atrium, and passing into the gardens that lay without.

"Oh, my dear, my dear! What have you done? how could you wound him so?" I moaned to her, feeling the arrow of her hardness in my heart. There was a great pain in her own eyes, as she turned them on me; they had a dreamy look too, as of one seeing afar off some sweet vision.

"I am sorry, but I could do no less; not to be faithful," she said, softly and very low. Then she also went away, holding her book, and left me sorrowful and afraid.

CHAPTER XVIII.

The days of joyous, foolish mumming came—the Carnival mumming that as a boy I had loved so well, and that, ever since I had come and stitched under my Apollo and Crispin, I had never been loth to meddle and mix in, going mad with my lit taper, like the rest, and my whistle of the Befana, and all the salt and sport of a war of wits such as old Rome has always heard in midwinter since the three nights of the Saturnalia.

Dear Lord! to think that twice a thousand years ago and more, along these banks of Tiber, and down in the Velabrum and up the Sacred Way, men and women and children were leaping, and dancing, and shouting, and electing their festal king, and exchanging their New-Year gifts of wax candles and little clay figures: and that now-a-days we are doing just the same thing in the same season, in the same places, only with all the real faunic joyfulness gone out of it with the old slain Saturn, and a great deal of empty and luxurious show come in instead! It makes one sad, mankind looks such a fool.

Better be Heine's fool on the seashore, who asks the winds their "wherefore" and their "whence." You remember Heine's poem—that one in the "North Sea" series, that speaks of the man by the shore, and asks what is Man, and what shall become of him, and who lives on high in the stars? and tells how the waves keep on murmuring and the winds rising, the clouds scudding before the breeze, and the planets shining so cold and so far, and how on the shore a fool waits for an answer, and waits in vain. It is a terrible poem, and terrible because it is true.

Every one of us stands on the brink of the endless sea that is Time and is Death; and all the blind, beautiful, mute, majestic forces of creation move around us and yet tell us nothing.

It is wonderful that, with this awful mystery always about us, we can go on on our little lives as cheerfully as we do; that on the edge of that mystical shore we yet can think so much

about the crab in the lobster-pot, the eel in the sand, the sail in the distance, the child's face at home.

Well, no doubt it is Heaven's mercy that we can do so; it saves from madness such thinking souls as are amongst us.

Now as for our Carnival, foolish no doubt it is, and strange, that, for five and twenty hundred years, souls that all that time have held themselves immortal should have liked such pranking and parading, and fooling and fussing. But, all the same, Carnival is pretty, and we Romans are perhaps the only folk since the Milanese who know really how to amuse ourselves in its sports.

Out of place, too, it may be; yet Rome looks well in the winter's sun, with all the colours of the masquers shining on its great staircases and its vast courts, under the great gloomy walls overtopped with the orange and aloe, and in the arched passage-ways where the lanterns swing; when costumes by the million flaunt their tinsel and satin at the shop-doors and in the dens of the hucksters, and blow in the breeze with all colours, and in every nook and corner of the old steep streets and the wide piazzas there are groups dancing and sporting, and the thrum of a tambourine to be heard.

One is glad to get away from it all into the quiet of the deserted galleries, or of the ilex avenues of the gardens and woods; but, all the same, Rome looks well, and would have pleased Commodus and Messalina when the riderless horses fly from the Column of the Sun to the Venetian Palace, and the war of the lighted tapers wages all down the mile of the Corso under the red-and-white balconies; and there are groups to gladden a painter's soul, if not a sculptor's, where girls in their black masks caper atop of a flight of steps to the sound of a mandoline, and through the gigantic gates of some palace a band of many coloured roisterers rush into the darkness where the fountains are shining amongst the jagged leaves of the palms and the cactus.

All foolish sights, no doubt, as were the revels of Saturn long ago, yet picturesque and pretty.

In the high days of Carnival Giojà had never gone out often, and never even to the studio, unless accompanied by Maryx or myself. Indeed, little of the riot came near the Ponte Sisto in any way; but still there were always stray groups of maskers twanging their guitars and thumping their tambourines, and the good folk of the Via Giulia and thereabouts were at that time none of the quietest neighbours.

She never could endure to hear the sounds or see the grotesque dresses; the Rome of the past to her was never the actual ancient Rome of the gross Saturnian verses; of the coarse Ludi Liberales; of the drunken Matrons of the Bona Dea; of the debased populace scrambling and scuffling for the fried meats and the savoury cakes of Domitian.

The Rome of the past was always in her sight chaste, austere, noble, self-contained, as it was actually in the earliest days, when a tuft of grass with earth on the roots was symbol of the highest power, and the voice of Scipio Nasica was raised against the erection of the theatre as an emasculating spectacle.

This was how she always thought of Rome, and the Carnival crowds were almost worse to her than had been the fish-sellers and the barrow-drivers clamouring round the site of the Porticus Octaviana on that first summer noon which had brought her to the city. Once I had tried to persuade her that the Corso was pretty to behold, with its motley crowds and draped balconies, its flowers and soldiers, its masks and dominoes, its cars and chariots, its resounding music and its mirthful faces; but she would not hear of it.

"It was the Flaminian Way!" she said to me in reproof. "There is only one kind of procession befits it; when the ghosts of the legions come down at nightfall, passing Sulla's tomb. Do you never see them? Oh, I can see them, whenever you take me there by moonlight."

And no doubt she could, as Martial's imagination saw "all Rome" waiting there for Trajan, whilst Trajan was lying dead.

No doubt she could, for her young brain was full of these things, as other maidens' are of lovers' tales and fortune-tellers' follies.

So she had said all the winter before, and she was never changeable, but in all things only too steadfast.

It was her habit to go into the beautiful old gardens of the Vatican, or of the Albani Villa, or any other of the places where the interest of Maryx secured her free permission to enter, in the noisy boisterous days; or to pass those hours, when all the world was masquerading, in the ilex avenues of the Villa Medici, whence you see St. Peter's through a screen of ilex leaves, and as you pace the cool, leafy, dusky aisles of the clipt box and arching arbutus, seem to be as far removed from all the life that is going on under the million roofs that lie beneath the terrace, as though Rome were a thousand leagues away beyond the mountains.

She had always shunned all sights of the merry, motley life of Carnival, though it is pretty enough seeing the little children run through the old courts, clad in the old costumes of the bygone days, and the devils, and harlequins, and soldiers, scaramouches, and crusaders, and troubadours, sitting drinking in the wineshops, or skipping with loud glee down the pavement in the many Teniers-like pictures, all colour and stir, that every tavern, or bakery, or fruitshop shows at that time through its arched entrance.

But she saw no beauty in it, and it hurt her like a discordant chord, or a line out of drawing. She liked better to be left alone on the grass before the Renaissance housefront of the great Academy, or within doors before the casts of the Braschi Antinous and the Capitoline Juno; or to pass the day in the Borghese Palace, where Raffaelle's frescoes of Alexander's Nuptials are (how pure and perfect are his frescoes, he should never have touched oils!), and through the window in the passage-way you see the fountain up-springing, and through the arch beyond, the trees by Tiber, and know that within the other rooms close by you are Titian's Graces, and his Loves, and Albano's sporting Seasons, and so many earlier painters' sad sweet Saints, and dying Christs, and that beautiful Presepio of Lorenzo Credi's, of which the world does not know half enough, and that S. Cecilia of Domenichino's, which they will call a Sybil there, despite her lute and music.

Therefore, she surprised me much on one of the latter days of this Carnival, when I had gone with her, as my old habit was, on such roistering afternoons, into the little garden of the Rospiglioso Casino, which is as sweet a place perhaps as any that we have; small as it is, it seems to have all mediæval Rome shut in it, as you go up the winding stairs, with all their lichens and water-plants and broken marbles, into the garden itself, with its smooth emerald turf and spreading magnolias, and broad fish-ponds, and orange and citron trees, and the frescoed building at the end where Guido's Aurora floats in unchanging youth, and the buoyant Hours run before the sun.

Myself, I own I care not very much for that Aurora; she is no incarnation of the morning, and though she floats wonderfully and does truly seem to move, yet is she in no wise etherial nor suggestive of the dawn either of day or life. When he painted her, he must have been in love with some lusty taverner's buxom wife busked in her holiday attire.

But whatever one may think of the tamed Aurora, of the loveliness of her quiet garden home, safe in the shelter of the stately palace walls, there can be no question; the little place is beautiful, and sitting in its solitude with the brown magnolia fruit falling on the grass, and the blackbirds pecking between the primroses, all the courtly and superb pageant of the dead ages will come trooping by you, and you will fancy that the boy Metastasio is reciting strophes under yonder Spanish chestnut tree, and cardinals, and nobles, and gracious ladies, and pretty pages are all listening, leaning against the stone rail of the central water.

For this is the especial charm and sorcery of Rome, that, sitting idly in her beautiful garden-ways, you can turn over a score of centuries and summon all their pomp and pain before you, as easily as little children can turn over the pages of a coloured picture-book until their eyes are dazzled.

Giojà, I say, startled me as we strolled there this latest day of February while all the city was alive with masquers, for abruptly, with her face quite pale, and a look as of tears in her eyes, she turned to me and asked me to take her to see the mumming of the streets. We had only been a few minutes in the place; and were intending to go on, and see the sun set from beside the ruins of the Temple of the Sun in the Colonna gardens, with the pretty pigeons strutting to and fro, and the mass of the Capitol looming beyond the cypresses and the pine boughs on that sunniest terrace, and the grand old war-worn tower of Sta. Caterina lifting itself above the leaves, and far down beneath the ripple of all the falling water, and glow of the scattered gold of the orange trees.

Hence I was more amazed than by anything that could have happened, when, upon this last great Sunday of Carnival, she said to me:

"Take me to see it; take me somewhere where I shall not be seen myself. You can do that, can you not?"

I was speechless with surprise; but then, reflecting, was rejoiced that anything like a girl's natural interest in merry foolish things was waking in her.

It was not very easy for me to comply; for every hole and corner of the Corso is of money's worth on those days; but I had many friends, and amongst them one good soul, an old apothecary and herb-seller, who had a little old dark nook of a shop projecting into the Corso and looking straight up it into the

great square where once senators and patrician women were burned at the stake to light the chariot of Nero, and beyond to the trees and shrubs upon the left where once Cæsar and Pompey were feasted in the Hall of Apollo.

The apothecary had once told me he would let me have for her use one of his dusky, small, cabin-like windows that were wedged in above a great noble's scutcheon and next to a quattro-centro portico.

So there I took her before the festival had fairly begun, and there she could sit unseen behind the Pesaro gallipots and the big Faenza jars of sweet and bitter waters, such as might very well in the old times have held choice poisons for pious cardinals' blessings or the salving of impatient heirs.

No one could see her, for the rich purple and Turkish stuffs of the carpets draping the balcony of the noble's portico, next door, completely screened her from the view of any one.

What did she want to see? Her face was pale, her eyes were intent; it was not the face of a girl come for the first time to a merry spectacle.

My lean and learned old friend, who was like a leech of Molière or Goldoni, looked at her gravely.

"My dear, you look as if you came to some sad sight. Well, perhaps it is one—when one thinks that once the Scipiones and the Antonines were applauded here."

But even the allusion did not move her; she sat silent and abstracted, her beautiful eyes watching—for something—like a straining antelope's, up and down the slowly filling Corso.

Music began to sound; clarions to blow; gay colours to mingle together on pretty, foolish figures; all the swift shrillness of the Roman clamour began to rise, and the poor fluttering birds tied to the nosegays to be tossed from pavement to casement, and then back again:—for who should care for their sufferings here, poor little simple dwellers on the sweet honeysuckle and acanthus thickets of the wide Campagna; here, where Zenobia, and Vercingetorix, and so many other noble souls had been dragged before them, bound and captive, in the conqueror's wake?

Giojà sat intent and silent, leaning her chin upon her hands, her arms upon the stone sill of the little window; the apothecary and I, old men and content to be silent, stood behind her, thinking of mirthful Carnivals of our youth, when to pelt foes and friends, and to toss the bladders and to catch the flowers and

sweetmeats, and to dance to the twang of our viols, clad in all the colours of the rainbow, was the finest sport of all the jocund year.

An hour and more went by, till the winding street was as fully crowded with trampling horses and jostling throngs as ever it had been on any triumph of the armies returned from Asia or from Africa under Scipio or Sulla. She still watched, quite motionless; at last I saw a sudden colour in her face, a sudden lightening under the drooped lids of her attentive eyes.

It was the day when the great equipages of the princes and the nobility came forth, gilded and glorious under a rain of flowers.

I looked down into the street; there was a very grand carriage just beneath, nearly smothered in camellias, red and white; lying back in it under that foam of camellia blossoms were Hilarion and the Duchess Sovrana; standing up before them in fanciful disguise was the boy Amphion:—I fancied he looked sullen.

Giojà watched them, the colour burning deeper and deeper in her face, then fading away utterly: she did not move or speak. The carriage stood still a little while, under the pressure of the crowd, and then moved slowly onwards towards Nero's hill.

Amphion had looked up; he alone had found out her face, hidden in the little dark window under the carvings and the stuffs.

He kissed a cluster of camellias and threw it up to her; it fell short, and was trodden down under the many hurrying feet.

The carriage passed on, Giojà did not move; she had become white as the marble in which her Nausicaa likeness had been wrought.

I understood now why she had asked to be brought here.

No doubt Amphion had told her, for it seemed to me that he was playing his part in the pageant with an angry and reluctant grace. She never stirred; she might have been deaf for anything that she appeared to hear of the gay vociferous tumult, and when I looked at her more narrowly I saw the lids were closed over the eyes that still seemed to watch the street.

She sat there throughout the afternoon, the carriage passing thrice; Amphion threw no more flowers; Hilarion never lifted his gaze to the little cabin-like window behind the great escutcheon; he was smiling and murmuring indolently in his

companion's ear, and casting camellias at the many women that he knew.

When the sunset began to burn red behind the trees of Lucullus's gardens, she left the window with a sudden gesture, like one waking cold and numb from a bad dream.

"Can we go home by some by-street? I am tired."

It was difficult, but out of the back-door of the apothecary's little dwelling we got into an open court or yard, thence by a turning into the Via di Ripetta, and so to the quay of Ripetta, where my friend the ferryman was drifting quietly in his ark-like covered boat, as though there were no mad world astir within a rood of him.

Here it was quite dusk; winter mists hung on the river; on the opposite bank the alders were blowing in a chill wind; oxen were dragging timber; some peasants were going on their way to the fields of S. Angelo, where the messengers of the Senate hailed Cincinnatus,—"May it be well with the Republic and with you!"

"Let us go for a walk; it is a long time since I had one," she said, feverishly, and her voice had a changed sound in it. "Let us go out there into the country."

"But it is so cold, and nearly dark——"

"What does that matter?" she said, for her, almost irritatedly, for I had always seen in her a perfect sweetness and evenness of temper, not only in large things (where it is easy), but in small ones, which is far more difficult.

I was in the habit of always giving in to her. My old friend, the Charon of Ripetta, nothing loth, took us over the silent, dreary, misty water, and we were soon on the other bank, walking against the bitter wind, then tossing the leafless trees, and through the wet meadows of what used to be the old Navalia, where the galleys that took Rome out on the high seas to her conquests, used to be laid up high and dry amongst the rushes and the yellow moly.

She did not speak; she walked straight on, with that swift, fleet, elastic walk, which Maryx was wont to say was worthy of Atalanta.

It was very still and ghostly there; the damp curled up like smoke; the enormous masses of the Vatican and of S. Angelo loomed dully through the partial darkness; in the grass of these flat meadows, once the Circus of Nero, frogs and nightjars hooted; in the leaden dampness and chilliness one seemed to see the

Christian Virgins slain after passing through worse than death, as Pasiphaë, as Dirce, as Amymone; one seemed to see the Mercury coming and touching each naked corpse with his red-hot caduceus to test if any lingering life might yet make torture sweet, and finding any, calling the masked slaves to drag the bodies out by their feet, and end them with a mallet, Nero and the pretty painted dames smiling all the while.

"Let us go back," I said to her. "This place is miserable at night; one fancies one meets ghostly things; all this earth was soaked through and through with blood;—come away."

But she did not appear to hear; she was moving through the wet rank grass with her head bare to the wind.

"Is she a good woman or a bad?" she asked, suddenly.

"What woman, my dear?"—here it seemed to me as if one could only think of Poppea—poor, pretty, frail, imperial Poppea, "a fury with a face of the Graces."

"The one with him," she said, simply.

"Oh!—good? bad? those words are strong; most men, and women too, are best described by neither, they fall betwixt the two; we are not in Nero's times, when there was Nero, yet there was Paul also. Let us turn back; the night is very cold."

"Is she good or bad?" she said, with her usual insistance.

"A great dame; a faithless wife; a princess and a jade; a common type of that world of theirs; not worth your thought; you are far off in higher air——"

"A bad woman, then?"

"My dear, in their world they do not use these words. Were she a taverner's or carpenter's wife she would be called bad, no doubt, and her husband would use sharp steel if only to be no more the laughing-stock of neighbours. But they have other logic in that greater world. With us a jade is a jade, but there their reasonings are more complex, as befits more cultivated folk. Why talk of any such matters? You do not understand the thing that a bad woman is;—or high or low."

"Yes, I understand:—but why do men love them?"

"Ah! Let us call up the shades of the Antonines, and question them."

She was silent.

"They do not always love," I added. "Sometimes they hate, but that holds them just as well or even better: men are made so; as for why,—ask Hermes; or, as Christians say, the devil."

She did not answer, but walked on through the wet fields

where Cincinnatus had left the plough to serve his city, only that in a few hundred years Caligula and Caracalla might come after him and be masters of the world. Oh, grim derision that callest thyself History! Pondering on the bitterness of thy innumerable ironies, thy endless chronicle of failures, the bravest and the humblest soul might almost "curse God and die!"

The pains that men have been at to make mankind most miserable! and the little that heroism or virtue ever have been able to do to make them happy!

"Why speak of love at all, then?" she said, in a low voice that had scorn in it. "Love is not born *so*."

"My dear, of love there is very little in the world. There are many things that take its likeness: fierce unstable passions and poor egotisms of all sorts, vanities too, and many other follies—Apatê and Philotês in a thousand masquerading characters that gain great Love discredit. The loves of men, and women too, my dear, are hardly better very often than Minos' love for Skylla; you remember how he threw her down from the stern of his vessel when he had made the use of her he wished, and she had cut the curls of Nisus. A great love does not of necessity imply a great intelligence, but it must spring out of a great nature, that is certain; and where the heart has spent itself in much base petty commerce, it has no deep treasury of gold on which to draw—it is bankrupt from its very over-trading. A noble passion is very rare, believe me; as rare as any other very noble thing."

"Yes: I can believe that."

Her voice sounded tired and feebler than usual, and her steps grew slower.

"Yet Sospitra was happier," she added, "dying and having known love, than living loveless with all the knowledge that all the powers of the earth and air could bring to her."

The accursed poem had sunk into her mind with that force which came from the great truth that it embodied.

"Sospitra is a mere fancy and figure," I said to her, "and he who wrote it made the world weep with it, no doubt, but never spared a woman for its sake. He is like Phineus, whom Poseidon punished; he has the high gifts of prophecy and of golden wisdom, but two harpies are always with him that breathe on the sweetest and the simplest food, and taint it when he touches it. His harpies are Satiety and Disbelief."

"The fresh winds drove the harpies away," she said, softly; "drove them away for ever into their caverns in Krete."

"Because Phineus prayed for the winds and the Argonauts. Hilarion does not pray; to him his harpies are welcome."

She made me no reply; I heard her sigh; she walked on against the wind, baring her head to it with a sort of eagerness, and letting it blow in amongst her hair.

You may walk thence straight on between the hedges and the fields until the road begins to rise, and climb the sloping side of what was once the Clivus Cinnæ; it is lovely there in the spring-time, or later, when all the grass is full of violets and fritillaria, and the fragrant yellow tulip, and all the darkling blue of the borage tribe, whilst through the boles of the ancient cork and ilex trees you look and see the purple gleaming cupola of St. Peter's lifted against the sky, and the dome of Agrippa, and the Alban hills; but at night the road is dull and dreary, dark, and not very safe.

I was glad when she did not notice that I turned back to cross the river—she not heeding where we went.

I stumbled on, taking a homeward way through the mists and the gloom, while across on the other side of the Tiber one could see the serpent-like curving of the line of light where Carnival was rioting, and some faint bray of trumpets and noise of drums came confusedly to us through the vaporous night; there were pyrotechnic showers of all colours going up into the darkness to please the crowds of Rome; they rose from the square by the tomb of Augustus, where Livia sat by the burning pile for seven nights and seven days, disrobed, and with her hair loosed upon the wind, whilst the freed eagle cleft the air and rose above the flames.

We went homeward in silence, still along the shore and over our own bridge to where the water was falling, pale and beautiful, in the deserted place.

"Good night, dear friend," she said, softly, and her voice sounded to me unsteady and low as if from tears.

I went heavy-hearted to my nook in the street by my stall, where I slept.

He had cast his glamour on her, and the poison had sunk into her, and of what use was the shield of Athene Ergane now?

I sat by my little lamp, and the hours were sad to me.

The echoes of the boisterous revelries came dully to me; the lights of the coloured fires made the sky ruddy and golden

above the dark domes and roof; over the bridge and down the street gay groups came dancing, maskers with bladders and lutes in their hands.

Genius had given her the clue and the sword, and what use would they be to her, I thought. She would give them away, throw them down at his feet, and so perish herself—the gods are weak and men are cruel.

For I grew stupid and sleepy with fatigue, and heavy-hearted with a vague sore dread; and my eyes closed, and thus I did not see who came out from the house on the bridge.

CHAPTER XIX.

Now, as afterwards I learned, when she went up the stairs it was quite dusky, and even dark, for the three-wicked lamp had only one burner lighted, and there was no fire on the hearth either, Ersilia being a woman at all times very careful in such little matters, observing justly that the great things concerned the good God, but the little ones were all our own, as the good God sent the tempest, and there was no getting out of it, but if our sock or our smock were in rags the fault was our own, and easily to be mended with a needle.

So, there being no light to speak of, she went forward without seeing anything except the dim outline of Hermes, and she was touched by the soft cool hands of Hilarion ere she had perceived that any one was there.

"Abroad in this damp and chilly night!" he said, tenderly. "Is that wise for yourself or kind to those who care for you?——"

She started away from him and stood silent.

Her face was quite pale, her hair wet with the mists; her eyes were dim and dilated, coming out of the cold and the darkness.

"Let us light the fire; you are chilled to the bone," he said, softly taking her hands once more; but she withdrew them quickly. "Chills in our old Rome are dangerous. Who has been with you? Crispin? He should be wiser with all his

weight of years. I have had a wearying and stupid day; what is more stupid than the noise of crowds? I came, hoping for an hour's rest;—must I go away? I shall not go unless you force me."

And he bent down over the brushwood and fir apples on the stone of the old open fireplace, and busied himself with making the flame rise, and lit the other wicks of the oil lamp, and threw before the hearth a rug of skins that he had brought up from his carriage a little before, and the light beginning to warm and glow in the chamber, lighted up a great basket of roses that he had set on the floor.

"Sit down," he said, gently, and she obeyed him, sinking on the oaken settle; still quite silent, the mist of her damp hair like a pale circling nimbus around her head. She was used to see him there, and it did not seem strange to her.

"These are the tea-roses that you like," he went on, kneeling on one knee on the hearth, and putting some of the flowers on her lap. "These large crimson ones are the Marshal Bugeaud; how barbaric to give a name of war to so much fragrance! and this is the Belle Marguerite, and this the Narcissus, and this is Hymen; see how golden and brilliant and perfumed it is!—and this, so pure and white, is my favourite of them all, the Niphetos; the Niphetos is like you, I think, as you look now, you are so pale. Did you think I did not see you in that little window this afternoon? The boy threw you camellias. I would not throw you blossoms that were for all the world. I would not even look at you—being where I was. It would have been profanation."

All the colour came back in a second into her face; her cheeks burned; her eyes dropped.

"Why were you there then?" she said, very low, but with a firm voice—then paused as if afraid.

Hilarion smiled, stooping for more roses, so that she did not see the smile.

"Because men are fools, my dear," he said, gravely "Because we are no wiser than the poor silly greenfinches, that the Thuringian foresters net, by no better trap than a little bit of mirror set amongst the river rushes. Past follies have present obligations; and old sins have long shadows—but what do you know of those things? Believe me I was weary enough——"

She looked at him; then looked away.

The truth and strength of her own nature made her doubt;

the innocence and candour of her own nature made her believe. And of sophism such as his she had no conception, and from such a subject, vague as it was to her, she shrank by instinct.

"You did not seem weary," she said, with an aching pain in her voice.

Hilarion smiled.

"My child, do not take the face of a man for more than a mask—in public. When he is alone, look in his eyes and trust them."

"But Amphion said that you—loved her!"

She spoke very low and with a sort of shame.

Hilarion's face grew dark.

"Does he prate—the Greek boy? Let him keep his breath for his flute. What more did he tell you?"

"Not much more. Only that you would be with her there to-day; as you were."

"And was that why you went?"

"I wished to see her."

Her face grew paler again and resolute, and her mouth had its curve of scorn, which Maryx had not put into his Nausicaa's. She was not aware of all that she expressed by that wish. She only said the truth as she always said it, when she spoke at all.

Hilarion busied himself with his roses. Then kneeling there, he took one hand of hers between his own, and rested them with the roses on her lap.

"Perhaps I loved her, as I have loved many, with passions that you cannot guess, so vile they are and poor and base,—for men are made so. Do you despise me that I own it?——"

"I do not know," she murmured; her colour changed, she trembled from head to foot, she did not look at him. She did not know what she felt; only it hurt her like a stabbing knife that he should speak so: and how, she marvelled, could Love be ever base?

For of Philotês she knew nothing.

"Do you think I love her *now?*" he said, and looked up at her in the dim firelight; the dewy leaves of the roses, and the brilliance of his own eyes, close to her drooping face in the soft shadows.

Her heart beat violently; her limbs shook; she was terrified she could not have told why; she sprang upon her feet, letting the flowers fall, and taking her hands away.

"What do you think?" he said, with soft insistance, still

kneeling there, and watching all the tumultuous pain in her with pleasure.

She stood erect, white and still, with her heart so loudly beating that he could hear it in the silence of the chamber.

"What can I tell?" she muttered. "Love—is it not always Love? It cannot change, I think;—and you were there to-day."

He smiled, and his eyes had a gleam in them that was half derision and half regret.

"Dear,—men have many loves; their true names are, or vice, or vanity, or feebleness, or folly, or many another that is not fitting for your ears. But the love you think of—that comes but seldom, and comes to few. I wrote of love all my life long, nothing knowing of it—till I came to you. Are you cold to me —are you against me—that you stand so still and pale?——"

And all the while he knew so well!

Her eyes dilated like a hunted stag's; her breath came fast and loud; a mortal fear possessed her; she put her hands to her heart.

"I am afraid!" she cried, and trembled, as though with the cold of the night.

Hilarion stooped his head where she knelt, and kissed her feet softly.

"Afraid! Of me?"

"Of myself!"—then with a wonderful light and glory quivering on all her face, and changing it as the break of day changes the earth and sky, she stretched her arms out to the shadows round her, as if in an oath to some great unseen god.

"It will be all my life!" she said, with a sob in her throat, yet the glory of the morning in her eyes.

He understood.

He rose, and kissed her on the mouth.

CHAPTER XX.

Early in the morning of the next day I was sitting at my stall, working by such grim light as there was; for it was a grey and gusty day, and the fountain sounded cold and chill, and Palès shivered despite all the straw, and there was a discordant blare of trumpets somewhere near that made one think of Seneca and his sore trouble in the showman's bugle playing.

There was not a creature astir near me; people were tired after the night's frolicking, and were lying abed to begin their capers afresh with spirits when noontide should be passed. I worked on in silence undisturbed, a few flakes of snow falling on the heads of Crispin and of Crispian above mine.

Suddenly, a little figure running fast down the Via Giulia, paused by me; it was a pretty figure, all in a Carnival disguise of mediæval minstrelsy, shivering sadly now, and splashed with mud.

"Amphion!" I called out in amaze, as Palès began snarling at his slender ankles.

It was indeed the lad; jaded and tremulous, very cold, and very pitiful to see.

"He has turned me out!" he moaned, like a child of seven years old. "Without a word, without a sign—only told me to go, and never dare return. What have I done? Oh, what have I done?"

"You have angered Hilarion?" I asked him, not surprised, for very often his caprices ended thus; and I remembered the poor dog he had killed.

"I do not know!" the boy sobbed; "I have done nothing. Nothing, nothing! When he came back last night, it was very late, he had told me to wait for him, so I had not dared undress; he looked at me—just looked!—but it was like the blue lightning, just as cruel and as cold; then he put his hand on my collar, and led me out of the great doors. 'Go out of Rome, and never dare return!'—that was all he said. He put a roll of money in my vest—here it all is—but not another word did he

ever say, but shut the doors himself upon me. It was nearly dawn. It was snowing. It was so bitterly cold. I came to you. I do not know where to go; what to do,—I have no friends!——"

I looked at the money: it was a roll of notes for a heavy sum —enough to keep the lad a year or more.

"You must have displeased him," I said; "and it is very like him to do so. He never wastes words on what displeases him. But it was cruel. He can be cruel."

Poor little Amphion was sobbing all the while, his gay dress all splashed and torn, his dark curls tumbled; his olive cheek blue with cold.

It was of no use to press him more; if he knew or guessed what had caused his expulsion, he would not say it: he was a Greek. All one could do was to shelter him, and take care of the money, and send him back to his own home.

As for speaking to Hilarion, past experience told me the uselessness of that.

Yet of course I tried it; whenever did the known futility of anything prevent one from essaying it, or whenever was past experience enough deterrent?

I warmed and fed the lad in the little den near the fountain which I had taken to sleep in since giving up my Hermes' chamber; then I went and sought Hilarion.

He was at those rooms in one of the old palaces of which the boy had spoken. There was difficulty in seeing him. They brought word first that he was not there, and then many very various excuses.

Not being easily baffled, and being convinced that there he was, I said nothing, but sat down on the steps to watch his coming.

There were a grand staircase, and old stone lions, and a lovely little green garden, then all in a golden glow with oranges, and with one of the few palms of Rome leaning under its green diadem in their midst. Along one side of it ran a frescoed casino like the one of Rospigliosi, in which Aurora and the rosy Hours are.

After waiting a long time, I saw him in that casino. I made straight to him. It might be fancy, but I thought he turned paler and looked guilty as his eyes lighted on me. Evidently he would have avoided me, but he could not do so.

"Perhaps I have no right to speak to you; but I cannot help

myself," I began to him. "That poor little fellow, whom you call Amphion—is his offence so great?"

It did not strike me at the time, but I remembered later that his face cleared and he looked relieved as of some apprehension of annoyance.

"Dear Crispin," he said, with a little smile, "that is so like you! Why waste your morning and disturb your peace? Has the boy been to you?"

I told him, and begged for the poor little culprit with the best eloquence I knew.

Hilarion heard indifferent; patient out of courtesy to me, but I could see no yielding in his face. He was looking at the frescoes on the wall near him, and pulling the orange blossoms.

He heard me till my breath and my zeal both paused panting. Then he spoke:

"The boy has nothing to complain of; I have given him enough money to keep him for two years. I have done with him. That is all. If you are his friend, put him in the first vessel that sails for Greece. Only take care he come near me no more. Do you know these frescoes are disputed? But I am nearly sure they are Masaccio's. He was in Rome, you know, some little time. I think I shall buy this house.

"After all," he went on, finding me silent, "there is no life like a Roman prince's; like life at all, indeed, in these grand old palaces of yours. Even the motley modern world gains grandeur from them, and even modern society itself looks like a pageant of the renaissance when the ambassador or the noble receives it in his great galleries rich in Raffaelle's, and Guido's, and Guercino's frescoes, and with all the lustre of that splendid age still lingering on the sculptured walls, and on the velvet dais, and all its light and laughter hiding with the Cupids amongst the flowers on the panelled mirrors: and all its majesty still abiding in the immense domes and stairs and halls where kings might marshal their armies, or the very archangels summon their heavenly hosts. Oh! there is no life like it: in these cool marble chambers, with their lovely pale frescoes, and their open courts, and their fountains, and their gardens, it is not difficult to forget the time we live in, and to think that Lucrezia is going by with her two hundred ladies, and their horses, and their cavaliers; or to shut the shutters and light the lamps, and in these noble rooms, where floor and ceiling and wall and casement are all masterpieces of the arts, think that Bernardo Accolti is

reading aloud to us by torchlight with his guard of honour round him. Oh! there is no life like the life of Rome: a woman going to her ball seems on these stairways like Veronica Gambara herself, and when you look in the glass, a little Love of Mario dei Fiori throws roses at you from it, and when you open your window you see a palm, or a god, or a lion of Egypt under a colossal arch, and the stars shine through the orange leaves, and the lute in the street sounds magical, and the gardener's daughter crossing the court looks like a pale sweet Titian of the Louvre. There is no life like the life in Rome. I shall purchase this palace."

"But what could a little lad so young have done?" I argued, foolishly, and having no patience to hear his picturesque discursive talk.

Hilarion played with the orange flowers.

"Have you anything more to say to me; for I am going to Daïla, and am pressed for time?"

"But he is so young, and all alone——"

"Dear Crispin, when I am tired, I am tired; and I am tired of flute-playing, that is all. There is no more to be said. Ask me anything for yourself, and you know I am glad to grant it always. But leave my own affairs to my own fancies. I think I shall buy this place, if only for the sake of these frescoes; the damp is hurting them. And there are some Overbecks upstairs in the great hall, dry and cold and joyless, but still very fine in drawing. Walk up and look at them, and forgive me if I seem rude to hurry from you——"

And so he went, seeming desirous to escape my importunity, but courteous and even kindly, though quite unyielding, as I had known him twenty and twice twenty times before.

I did not go and look at the Overbecks. I went back vexed and dispirited, having wasted my forenoon, as he had said.

I found the poor little flute-player warming himself over my brazier.

"You had best go seaward, and get home," I said to him, sadly.

But the boy set his small pearly teeth tight.

"No. I will stay in Rome, but he shall not know it."

"How can you do that?"

"I have enough money."

"But it is his money—you can hardly do what he forbids with that."

"What do you mean?" said Amphion, with an evil gleam in his soft dark indolent eyes. "When any one has given you a blow, it does not matter whether it is their own knife or not that you take out of their girdle to give it back with—at least, so they say where I come from——"

"Give back a blow? Hush, hush! what vengeance should you take, my poor little girlish lad? And besides, those are evil thoughts, Amphion, and he is only a patron, and capricious —such men always are."

He clasped his slender hands about the brazen vessel with the ashes in, and his pretty face looked pinched and sullen and changed.

"In those tales she read me," he said, slowly, "the hero slew twelve of their enemies to please his dead friend; and she thought that right and great; and it was a Greek did it. I know what I know. I can wait."

I thought it boyish prattling, and thought that it would pass; so let him be.

But there was more purpose in him than I supposed; for that very night, without saying anything to me, he slipped off his gay clothes, and cut his dark curls, and made himself look like any other of the little brown half-clad fisher lads swarming about the bank of the populous Tanner's Quarter, and hid his money heaven knew where, and hired himself out as if he had none, to a fisherman of the Rione, who spent life watching his *girella*, and pulling his skiff to and fro between the arches of Ponte Sisto and Quattro Capi.

The boy would hardly say more than a mute, and was unhandy, and delicate as a girl, though at home in the water from childish habits in his own archipelago; but I suppose he used his money adroitly, for the fisherman never called him to account for laziness or clumsiness, but let him do very much as he liked, making a pretence of lying on the damp ground to watch the fish sweep with the current into the nets, or pulling the little boat about round the Tiberine Isle, and under the Temple of Vesta.

Amphion shunned me, and never went near Giojà, and I did not think it was my business to betray him, so I let things be, and often after dusk a flute as sweet as a nightingale's song made music under the piles of the bridge of Sextus, sighing through the dark in answer to my Faun in the fountain.

But Giojà took no notice. I do not suppose that she even

heard. There was so much melody at twilight all about there; from guitars thrumming in balconies, and tambourines ringing in tavern doorways, and students singing as they passed from shore to shore, and fishermen as they set their nets; and in her own heart, then, there was that perpetual music which makes the ear deaf to every other harmony or discord: the music which is never heard but once in life.

But of this I then knew nothing.

I only saw that her step was elastic, that her eyes were full of light, that her face had lost that deep and troubled sadness which it had never been without before since the day that she sought Virgilian Rome and found but ruin. I was glad, and never thought to trace the change to its true source. She was more silent than ever, and more than ever seemed to like to be alone; but she was occupied on a new and greater work than her Penthesileia, and I supposed that this absorbed her.

I was used to the way of artists, and knew that true Art allows no friends; it is like Love. One day Love comes, and then slighted friendship is avenged.

The monumental sculpture of Greece was very true in its allegories—where the young lovers, led by Love, walk hand-in-hand, veiled, and not seeing whither their steps lead; is that not as true to-day as it was three thousand years ago? And yet again, where Love burns the butterfly in the flame of the altar and turns his head away, weeping, so as not to see the pain that he is causing? As Love was then, so is Love now. These allegories have lost nothing of their sweet and bitter truth through Time. Love burns p the soul. He may weep, yet he is ruthless. Never more can the wings rise that he has laid in ashes in the fire. And where he leads, needs must the led follow, blinded and deliriously content, and the end of the path none know but he.

Meanwhile, of Hilarion I had no serious thought; for I never saw him pass Ersilia's door, and indeed he seemed to me to be more than ever with his imperial jade the Duchess.

One evening the people were coming out from the great church of the Trinity of the Pilgrims hard by my fountain, and there was a smell of incense on the air, and a sound of chaunting everywhere, because it was in the days of Lent, and mirthful King Carnival had gone to his grave and Pasquino back to his solitude; and that evening as I sat stitching, communing with my own thoughts, and not liking them, because of late they had

got confused and cloudy, and I had a sense of impending woe without any corresponding sense of how to meet and to prevent it, Giojà came to me as her habit had used to be, though of late she had changed it, and touching me gently said to me:

"Let us go for one of our old walks. Will you not take me? The sun is setting."

Palès leaped for joy, and I rose in obedience, glad as the dog was to see her return to one of our old familiar customs, that of late had been abandoned, as the vague restraint of an unexplained estrangement had grown up between her and me.

She was very silent as we walked, but that was usual with her; for unless strongly moved she had never been given to many words.

We came away through the vegetable market, and the windy square, dedicated to Jesus, and so past the Hill of the Horse, as we called it, to our favourite Colonna gardens, where she and I had spent many a pleasant quiet hour, with Rome outspread like a map at our feet, and the iron gates closed between us and the outer world.

We sat down on the upper terrace, where the pigeons and the geese pace amongst the flowers, and the pine stem stands that was set there when Rienzi died, and that brave old tower rears itself above the ilexes against the blue sky, which the people will call the Tower of Nero, though Nero never beheld it.

She leaned there as she had done a hundred times, looking down on to the shelving masses of verdure, and across the bare wilderness of roofs that seem to rise one on another, like the waves of a great sea arrested and changed to stone, with the sky-line always marked by the distant darkness of the pines and the dome of St. Peter's against the light.

"If one lived in it a thousand years, could one exhaust Rome!" she said below her breath. "Always I loved it; but now——"

She paused; and I, coward-like, fool-like, did not ask her what she meant, because I shrank from every chance of hearing the name of Hilarion on her lips. God forgive me! If only I had known——

The pretty pigeons, blue and bronze and white, came pecking and strolling round us, looking up with their gemlike eyes for the crumbs that we were used to bring them.

"I forgot their bread; I am sorry," she said, looking down on

them, as she stroked the soft plumage of one that she had always especially caressed, and which would let her handle it.

"Will you do something for me?" she said, holding the bird to her breast, as she had held the Sospitra. "That is what I wanted to ask you. I have not seen Maryx since that day when you said that I wounded him. I have been to the studio, but he is never there. Listen: he was wrong and unjust, and it was not to me that the insult was, but to what he spoke of; yet he has been so good to me, and I can never repay it, and I seem thankless, and he will not understand. Will you tell him for me that I can bear no bitterness in my heart against him, and that the gratitude I give to him will never change? Will you tell him?"

"My dear, it is not gratitude that he wants," I said, and then paused; for after all I scarcely dared to speak for him, since for himself he was silent. "It is not gratitude that he wants; great natures do not think of that. They act nobly as mean ones meanly, by their instinct, as the eagle soars and the worm crawls. Maryx would be glad of your faith, of your obedience, of your affection, for indeed you owe him much; I do not mean such vulgar debt as can be paid by any feeling of mere obligation, but such debt as may well be borne by one frank and pure nature from another, and can be only paid by loyal love."

And then I stopped for fear of saying too much, because I had no warrant from him, and a certain look of alarm and of distaste that came upon her face arrested me.

She did not answer me for a few moments, but bent her face over the bird she held.

"I shall seem thankless to him, and you," she said sorrowfully, and then was still and seemed to draw her words back as remembering some order not to speak. She laid her hand upon my arm, the hand which had held the drooping poppies that day when I had seen her first.

"Pray tell him I am thankful, always thankful," she said, with a tremor in her voice. "He has been very good to me, good beyond all my own deserving—and you too. If ever I pain you, you will forgive me, will you not? For so long as I shall live I shall remember always how you sheltered me in that time of wretchedness, and all the peaceful days that you have given me."

The bird struggled from her breast and flew to regain its fellows; hot tears had fallen from her eyes upon its burnished

sapphire head and seared it. I gazed on her, touched to my soul, yet troubled.

"Why, my child, why, my dear, you speak as though you were going to join those gods you love, and leave us and Rome desolate!" I murmured, with a poor attempt at lightness of heart and speech; "but as for what I did for you—it was nothing; you forget my dream, you know I could do no less for you, my Ariadnê, come from the shades to earth."

Her hand fell from my arm; her face changed.

"Do not call me by that name—I loathe it," she said, with a sudden impatience; "I am not like her. I never can have been like her, and Homer is too kind to her by far! Let us go home now. You will tell Maryx what I said. I would not pain him. But he will never understand——"

"He understands well enough," I said bitterly, for something in her tone had stung me. "He understands that two years of purest devotion to every highest interest of yours weighs as nothing in the scale beside a few forced hothouse roses and a few hectic idle poems; he understands that well."

"You are unjust," she said, merely, as she had said it to Maryx, and she walked slowly away from the sunny terrace, down between the high walls of ilex and arbutus, and so homeward.

I did not speak any more. I felt angered against her, and Heaven forgive me! I did not know—— Silently and sadly I followed her through all the narrow, crooked, noisy passages and streets till we reached the familiar shadow of our Holy Trinity of Pilgrims, and going a little further were at home.

At the bridge where Ersilia's house-entrance gaped wide open, she stood still, and held her hands out to me once again.

"Forgive me," she said, very low under her breath.

I thought she meant me to forgive her impatience of my rebuke, and I took her hands, so fair and slender and unworn, tenderly within my own, that were so hard and brown and furrowed.

"Dear, where we love much, we always forgive, because we ourselves are nothing, and what we love is all."

"Thank you," she said softly, and let her hands linger in mine; then she passed away from me into the darkness and the coldness of the house.

I went back to my stall, and though I was troubled yet I was relieved, because she had given me gentle words to bear to

Maryx, if they were not all one could have wished. The Faun sang me a song in the fountain as I sat under the wall of the old monastic hospital that had sheltered me so many years.

I heard the song for the last time.

CHAPTER XXI.

Now it came to pass that the evening following, when I was sitting at my stall, having lit my lamp to see to finish a more delicate piece of work than common, I felt weary and out of spirits, I could not have well told why, and sat sighing as I stitched; sighing in my own meditations, for the blithe old days when a hand at cards and a flask of wine and a merry companion had made bright the winter nights to me, and the finding of an evangeliarium in the mediæval Greek or Latin, or of a broken seal-ring or a fragment of a marble hand, made me so happy that I would not have changed places with a king, as I tramped in the snow or the mud, through the darkling streets of Rome.

Now I felt heavy-hearted; all my quarter was empty; the people were gone to the Piazza Navona, where a mid-Lent fair was, with the booths, and the fun, and the frolic, and a year or so before I should have gone too, and laughed with the loudest in the old Circus Agonalis around Domitian's obelisk, with the splash and sparkle of Bernini's fountains reflecting the changing lights of the little coloured lamps.

As it was, I sat and stitched, and Palès slept, and the stars began to come out above Tiber, in clear cold skies that were cloudless.

It was so entirely still that a step coming down over the bridge made me look up; I saw Maryx as I have seen him many a time in a score of years since in the days of his youth he had made my Apollo Sandaliarius.

He paused by my stall.

"Is she not well, that she has not been to me of late?" he asked.

A vague trouble began to stir in me.

"Has she not been?" I asked him. "No; I have heard nothing."

"But you have not seen her to-day?"

"No, but often the day passes——"

I did not end the phrase, fearing to seem to blame her; for indeed it pained me that of late she had so very seldom come to lean her hands on my board, and ask how things went with me, and beg me to go and sit with her in Hermes' room; or wander through the streets, as before the last few months it had been so constantly her habit to do that I had grown used to it, and missed it as an old dog will miss the pleasure of a walk.

Maryx stood silent, while the light from my lamp fell on his noble face, which was flushed and troubled.

"I spoke to her wrongly a month ago," he said at last. "It was base in me, and very unworthy. It is not for me to depreciate his genius. It is not for me, if she find beauty in it, to say her nay; beauty there is, and if she do not see the foulness beneath it—so be it. To the pure all things are pure. I would ask her pardon. Perhaps I have driven her away. Shall I find her in her room?"

My heart leaped with joy.

"Of course!" I said hastily; "and you were in no way to blame, and it is only like your nobleness; and she is worthy of it, for she, too, repents and regrets that moment of cold words. Look! She bade me say so to you only yesterday, in the Colonna gardens. She said, 'Will you tell him for me that I can have no bitterness in my heart for him, and that my gratitude will never change.' That is what she said; the tears in her eyes the while. She was too proud or too shy to say so to you herself. But her heart is tender, and if you put out your hand, she will give hers now—ah, so gladly—that I know!"

So I spoke, like a fool as I was.

Maryx looked at me with a beautiful light and warmth upon his face.

"Is that indeed true? or do you say it to make me deceive myself? Better all pain—all life-long pain—than any self-deception."

"Nay, it is true; that I swear. Go you and hear her say it again. She does repent herself."

"I would take nothing from mere obedience, mere sense of gratitude," he muttered; but the light of love was still in his eloquent eyes.

"Go you yourself to her," said I, laughing, like the foolish thing I was, and got up and went quickly before him across the street to Ersilia's door. "For now," I said to myself, "he will speak straightly to her, and all will be well between them for ever."

But at the door Pippo, leaning there smoking, swore that the girl was not within, nor had she been seen all day, he said. I looked up at Maryx. His face seemed to me to be stern and pale and disquieted.

"Let us ask Ersilia," he said; and I went with him into the house.

"Has she not been to you?" said Ersilia, coming out with a lamp held over her head. "Oh, yes; she left here this afternoon, quite early, as her habit is; I thought she was still up yonder with your marbles."

Then a great and sore trouble fell upon us that was the beginning of the end.

Maryx never spoke. He went with swift strides up to the chamber, and entered it, for the door had no lock. The light from the newly risen moon, that hung above his own Golden Hill, streamed soft and pallid across Hermes, and left the rest of the empty space in darkness.

She was not there. He struck a light, and searched the room, but there was nothing to show any intention of departure, and no word whatever of farewell. Only the beautiful head that she had drawn in black and white of Hilarion as the poet Agathon was no longer in its place against the wall.

There is something in the silence of an empty room that sometimes has a terrible eloquence: it is like the look of coming death in the eyes of a dumb animal; it beggars words and makes them needless.

Palès following raised her head and gave a long, low, wailing moan, that echoed woefully through the stillness, in which only the lapping of the water against the stones of the bridges was to be heard, and the stroke of a single oar that was stirring the darkness somewhere near.

Maryx looked at me, and there was that in his look which frightened me. He pointed to the empty place upon the wall.

"She is gone with him," he said: that was all; and yet in the sound of his voice it seemed to me that I heard speaking all the despair of a great life ruined and made valueless.

I broke out into God knows what wild protests and breath-

less denials; I would not let such a thing be said, be thought possible, for one single moment; she was so far above all touch of man, all weakness or passion or unwisdom of woman, it was impiety, profanation, folly, hatefulness, to hint such things or dream them. Was he mad?

Maryx stood there quite motionless; his face was white as his own marbles, and very rigid. All my passion passed him and left him unmoved as the winds leave the rocks.

"She has gone with him," he said again; and his lips were dry, and moved, as it were, with difficulty, and his great brown eyes, so brilliant and so bold, grew black with heavy wrath and desperate pain.

"Do you not see?" he muttered; "do you not see? Whilst we thought her a holy thing, he all the time——"

And he laughed—a terrible laugh.

The moon was on the face of Hermes; the mouth seemed to smile in pity and derision.

CHAPTER XXII.

Maryx stood quite silent and quite still.

I raved, and my own raving words fell back on my own ears and made me dumb again; and only the wailing of the dog at the moon, that was shining in the sky and on the river, filled the chamber.

I did not believe; I would not believe; I thrust all possibility of belief away from me as so much blasphemy and infamy against her; and yet all the while I knew that he was right, as you know that some ghastly sorrow is on its way to you long ere the day dawns that actually brings it.

"Why should you say so—why, why, why?" I said over and over again, till the words lost all sense to one. "She has gone astray somewhere in some old haunt of Rome, or fallen asleep, or ill, in some gallery of Capitol or Vatican; you know her ways; she dreams amongst the marbles till she is almost a statue like them. That is it; oh, that is it—nothing more. We

shall meet her coming through the darkness if we go into the streets, and then how she will smile at us—only she must never know. Why, Palès will find her; Palès is wiser than you are; Palès knows—— "

And then I broke down and laughed and sobbed, and struck my head with my own hands, thinking of that day when my Ariadnê had come to my stall in the summer noon, with the poppies and the passion-flowers in her hand; and Ariadnê had the clue and the sword, and gave them up and drifted away into a common love and common fate of women, sought and then forsaken.

Nay!—this could not be hers.

"No! oh, thrice no!" I screamed. "Ariadnê? It was but a jest to call her so, you know; a fancy and a jest; the gods could not be so cruel as to make it true; just for a dream, an old man's foolish dream in the hot sunshine!"

"Come!" said Maryx, and grasped me with his fine and slender hands as in a vice of iron, and thrust me from the threshold down the stairs.

"Where would you go?" I stammered; "into the streets?—to the Capitol, that would be best; she loves it so, and will sit thinking there for hours. She is shut in some gallery there; oh yes, that I am sure. Come to the Capitol, or, if not, to the Pio Clementino; she so often gets away amongst the marbles, that you know—— "

"Are you a madman?" said Maryx. "Come with me to him."

And he drove me with that grip upon my arm to the palace where the frescoes were in the garden, but of Hilarion there was nothing to be heard; he had not been there that day.

We went to Daïla.

The night grew very cold; there had been much rain; the water glistened amongst the tombs and under the bushes; the hoofs splashed it, the wheels sank in it; the snow lying on the mountains showed white in the moonlight; the wild foxes stole and burrowed in the sand holes as Nero did before them; the owl and the bittern cried from the waving shrubs that covered the site of lost cities; the night's ride was long and horrible. Soracte was always before us.

Maryx spoke not one word.

We sped across the desolation of the Campagna in the teeth of the bitter north wind. It was late in March, but unusually

cold; and I remember the smell of the violets as we crushed them, and of the sweet buds that were springing in the grass.

Hours went by ere we reached the ilex forest of Daïla. The great white house was shut and silent; dogs barked, and a mounted shepherd—a black weird figure against the moon—asked us what our errand was at such an hour; then, recognizing us, doffed his hat and let us pass.

Maryx, who had authority therein, entered. No mere word of any servant would he take. The house was empty, dark, mournful; the household was aroused from early sleep or friendly drinking, and could say nothing. Yes, their master had been there at three the day before, not since; of him they knew nothing.

It was of no use to question them; the people who served Hilarion were trained to silence and to lies.

We passed through all the grand, desolate, ghostly rooms, one by one, missing no gallery or cabinet or smallest chamber; then, baffled, drove back to Rome in the lonely, ice-cold midnight, through the rain-pools and the thickets that were now quite dark, the moon having by this time set.

"What will you do?" I muttered to him as we passed the gate into the city and the guards of it.

"Find him," he answered me.

I was deadly cold; my limbs were cramped; the mists and the winds of the night had penetrated my very bones; but something in his tone chilled me with a ghastlier chill. It seemed so simply plain to him that there could be no other way to reach her—only this.

For me, I would not own that she was other than somewhere astray, or sick and ill in one of the many favourite haunts she had in Rome.

"Let me down here," I said to him midway in the Corso. "I will go and ask at the galleries and palaces, and seek for her so. It will soon be dawn. The custodians all know me. She may be in the Borghese Villa itself. They close at dusk, and she is so careless, you know, once dreaming——"

Maryx smiled: a smile I never thought to live to see on his noble and frank lips.

"Do you deceive yourself—still?" he said.

He did not seek any such solace as lies in a vain hope; he knew the truth at once, and never pandered with it. It was his nature never to attempt to blind either himself or others.

As we neared the Ponte Sisto, there rose up from beneath my stall the small brown figure of a fisher-boy. It was Amphion.

He rose with difficulty and signed to me, and I went to him. He was shivering, and spoke disconnectedly.

"You did not know, but I knew. I, in the boat underneath, I could see his shadow so often. Oh, no; no one knew. He was afraid of the woman with the great black eyes; the woman they call a duchess. But he has cheated her. I have watched always, night and day, underneath the bridge. But much I could not tell. So this morning they escaped me; he is gone to Santa Chiara, and she goes too. What is that story she told me?—Ariadnê who went away over the sea—you called her so—Ariadnê was left all alone. He will leave her just so; he always does. I was with him a year, and I know. Does that man yonder care? He looks so pale. You are too old and I am too young; but he looks strong—does he listen? I ran and ran and ran to be even with him this morning, and the horse struck at me and I fell. It was my head. I feel stupid. I do not think she saw; that is why I did not come here before. I have been stupid all day. Oh, it is not much. That man is strong. Let him go—it will be too late; but there is always vengeance."

And then the lad swooned on the stones, having told the truth that Maryx had known without the telling.

Maryx listened; and he never spoke once, not once. For me, I think I was mad for the moment. They have told me so since. For to me it was as though the sweet serene heavens had opened to vomit a spawn of devils upon earth, and I would have sworn by my soul and the God who made it that she, my Ariadnê, would have borne the waters of the Tiber in a sieve by very force of her pure and perfect innocence, as did the Vestal Tuccia in this our Rome.

I was conscious of nothing till in the full light of day we drove against the wind on the way to Santa Chiara.

Santa Chiara was on the sea-coast. It was a little villa in a little bay; its roses and its orangeries grew to the sea's edge; it belonged to Hilarion, who sailed thence not seldom.

We went thither. It was many leagues away; there was no manner of reaching it possible except by horses. We drove out of Rome as the day broke.

There was no doubt now, nor any kind of hope.

It was sunset on the second day when we reached that ortion of the coast where Santa Chiara was.

"Let me go alone," said Maryx.

He seemed to me to have aged suddenly in those two nights and days as men do in a score of years; all his fearless royalty and carelessness of bearing were gone; he was grey and haggard, and had that deadly bloodlessness of the olive skin which is so much ghastlier than the pallor of fair faces; he was quite silent, he whose warm fancies and eager eloquence had ever found so natural a vent in words.

"Let me go alone," he said.

But I clung to him, holding him back. When men look as he looked, there is always death upon the air.

"What right have we?" I said to him. "She is not ours by any tie of blood or name; and what do we know? She is not here, that I am sure, nor with him anywhere. God would not let all that nobility be trodden in the dust for a man's vileness—oh, no! oh, no! What thought had she of love? No more than the Nausicaa you made standing by the sea-shore, pure as the pearls of it. Amphion is not to be listened to; he is a foolish boy——"

And then my words choked me; for I remembered how her face had looked as she had watched the Carnival pageantry, and how she had spoken that dark, wet, solitary night by Nero's Circus.

Maryx shook me roughly from him.

"Right? Do you want right to stop murder if you see it? And the murderer only kills the body, not the soul. Let me go."

"But if it be what you think—we are too late!"

The anguish upon his face smote me like a blow.

"There is always vengeance," he said, under his breath.

I was a Roman.

Vengeance to me was sacred as duty.

I let him go. I begrudged him the first right to it, but I could not gainsay it; he had the right of infinite patience, priceless gifts, and great and generous love—all wasted; the supreme and foremost rights of a great wronged passion.

The morning had risen clear and fair; here southward the sunshine laughed upon a brilliant sea, deep-blue as the jewels men call sapphires; it was far milder weather; the orange groves were as a green-and-golden wood to the water's edge; the turf was azure with the wild hyacinths; against the white walls ten thousand China roses blossomed, fresh as the little rosy mouths of children.

We, who for two days and nights had neither closed our eyes nor taken off our clothes, were cold and stiff from the heavy chills of long exposure. We shuddered like frozen things in all that radiant and elastic light, and delicate air, fragrant with the smell of the orange, fruit and flower, and with the glad salt scents of the surf that was breaking, curled and snowy, on the smooth beach at our feet.

But even vengeance was denied him.

The long, low house, white as a seashell and gay with many climbing plants, and walled all round with the high spears of aloes, was shut and silent even as Daïla had been.

In an oval window a woman was sitting, making thread-lace with nimble hands, and singing amongst the little Bengalese roses.

Yes, the master had been there, but he had gone—sailed away in his own vessel, as his custom was. Yes, he had been gone twelve hours. Yes, there was some one with him; he was never alone, never alone. And the woman laughed, twisting the threads of her lace, knowing the ways of her employer. Then she looked across the roses seaward, and, shading her eyes from the sun, pointed to a vanishing speck of white on the horizon. That was the schooner, yes, if we looked quick; in another moment it would be out of sight.

We looked. The canvas shone for one second more in the sunshine far off, so far, no bigger than the leaf of a white camellia flower; then blended with the blent light of sea and sky, and vanished and was lost.

I laughed aloud.

"The sails should be black—they should be black!" I muttered, and caught at the roses to help me stand, and felt the earth and the water all swirl and heave in giddy eddies round me. "The sails should be black. Theseus has taken her, and he will leave her on Naxos, and he will dance and laugh and garland the helm. Why are the sails not black?"

Then I fell down on the yellow sands.

And for a space I remember nothing more.

CHAPTER XXLII.

I DO not remember how I found my way back to Rome. I lost sight of Maryx. I was clearly conscious of nothing till I felt the wet tongue of Palès against my cheek, and found that I was sitting on my own old bench beside my stall in the moonlight by the bridge. I suppose he must have brought me home. I do not know; I had forgotten him. Perhaps he had forgotten me—why not?

It was night, and the place was deserted. There was no one about, only some girl from an open window above in the street was singing aloud a love-song. I could have choked her throat into silence. It is not wonderful that there is so much crime on earth; it is rather wonderful that there is so little, seeing how much pain there is, pain that is the twin brother of madness.

It was the middle of the night. I think two or three days had gone by. I cursed the stones of the street because they had borne his steps, and the waters under the arches because they had not risen and swallowed him.

Ah, God! in our hate (as in our love) how we feel our own cramped littleness; we stretch our arms for the whole universe to give us vengeance, and the grand old dome of the sky seems to echo with inextinguishable laughter. Ah, God! why are our hearts so great, our years so few and feeble?—therein lie all the mockery and cruelty of life!

I sat there like a stupid frozen thing, the vast mighty heavens above me—the heavens that should have been full of weeping angels and of avenging swords, if there were any more heed of human souls than of the ants that crawl along black dust on a white summer-way.

The dog kissed me, moaning; full of woe, because she knew that I was so.

I rose to my feet.

The Apollo Sandaliarius shone white in the moon-rays. Surely, it was only yesterday that she had come to me there,

having her hands on my stall, with the passion-flower and the poppy in her hands—the flower of death?

Surely, it was but yesterday that I had dreamed my dream in Borghese?

Then I looked at my things in the drawer under my stall; the dog had guarded everything safely, being fed, no doubt, by the neighbours.

There was in the drawer a long slender-pointed knife—a blade of steel made in past ages, and very keen; I had used it to cut through the skins of leather. I put it in my breast, where it is most at home with a Roman.

After all, there was no other vengeance than the poor simple trite one, all too short, that never could quench the thirst of man yet, nor wash out any wrong; there was no other. The skies did not fall—the stars did not pause in their courses. I looked at them. It seemed to me strange. I felt the edge of the knife, and waited for morning. There was only the old, old way.

"May death never come when you call on it!" said the old murdered man, Servianus, dying, to Hadrian. And in the after time Hadrian did cry on death to relieve him, and death would not come; not even his own hirelings would give the blow at his command; and the dead was avenged.

But then Servianus never saw his vengeance.

I would see mine; or rather, hers; so I told myself.

I was old, but I was strong enough for this.

I waited for the morning.

Of Maryx I had no thought.

I only saw the ship going away, away, away, over the shining silent sea in the clear daylight, with the white sails against the blue.

When the morning broke I went across the river, and across the fields, still misty, and wreathed with fog, to offices of the Vatican.

"You have offered me often many ducats for my Greek Hermes: give me them now, and take him," I said to them; I, who had never sold the smallest fragment, or the rustiest relic of the arts I loved. They closed with me eagerly, having for many a year desired that fair Greek thing for the great gallery they call the Pio Clementino.

"Put him next your Ariadnê!" I said to them, and laughed aloud in that grave palace of the Pope. They thought me mad,

no doubt; but they desired the statue, and they took no heed of me.

I sold him without looking on him, as a man in a pagan land may sell a cherished son. But I had ceased to care for him; he was a dumb dead thing to me—a carven stone. The thought of any statue froze my blood.

They fetched him down with oxen and men, bearing his beautiful tender snow-white limbs along the streets, where of course he must have passed so often in other ages, throned and garlanded, in such processions of the gods as Ovid and his ladies loved to watch.

I never looked at him—not once; I clutched the money that the guardians of the galleries gave me, and signed something they pushed to me, and hurried out into the air; bells were ringing, and the sun was bright. I felt dizzy, and deaf, and blind.

Hermes woke all mortals from sleep with his wand at the break of the day. Oh! that he had not wakened me!

I clutched my wealth that I had bought with my bartered god as with some human life, and felt for my long narrow knife in the folds of my shirt, and hurried away on my quest.

I had no clue to guide me, for the sea is wide, and its shores are many. Yet I had no doubt but that I should find them—no doubt at all; and so I passed out of Rome. And Hermes was set in the great gallery, with the ray-crowned head of a Jupiter Anxur beside him, and at his feet a jasper basin of Assyria, in which Semiramis might once have bathed.

It does not matter where I wandered, nor how I fared; I went on no clue whatever save the well-known name of Hilarion, but whosoever has any sort of fame has lighted a beacon that is always shining upon him, and can never more return into the cool twilight of privacy, even when most he wishes; it is of these retributions—some call them compensations—of which life is full.

Hilarion living always, whether he would or no, in the red light of that beacon fire, was not very difficult to track. I went my ground over and over, indeed, and made many a needless journey, but I had the money for my Hermes, which was a large sum, and more than enough; and so it came to pass that in the full heat of June, that sweetest month, when the stars are so many, and every soul on earth it seems ought to be glad, I found him in Venice.

There in the shallow salt lagoons was riding his own pleasure

vessel—the ship with the white sails. They said it was about to bear him eastward, to the old enchanted lands of the East.

The city was lovely, then in the full summer. I knew it well, and in my day had been happy there. Now it appeared to me hateful.

Its water streets were once familiar to one as the ways of Rome, and I had learned to row the fruit-boat to and fro, gorgeous with the autumn colours of their freight, and the beauty of the women of the Lido: now it was horrible to me.

The silence seemed like the awful stillness of a God-forgotten world; the gliding water seemed like the silvery sliding course of serpents; the salt-scented beach of the marshy shores seemed like the sulphurous dank mists of the awful world where Persephone mourned.

I stumbled along the narrow footpaths of the place, and the song of the boatmen and the laughter of the little children, dancing and dabbling on the edges of the canals, jarred through my brain, as in other years the like must have jarred on the heavy pains of the condemned creatures in the cells beneath the water-line.

I had no definite thought except to take his life.

The purpose had gone with me in my bosom; had lain with me by night; had grown to be a very part and parcel of myself, going with me over the blossoming lands in the summer of the year, lying down with me, and rising with me—the last memory and the first.

It had no horror for me.

I was a Roman, and to me vengeance was duty; beyond all other duty when it was vengeance for the innocent. I did not reason about it; I only said to myself that he should die.

It was easy to find the palace where he dwelt in; any one of the idlers of the street could show it me. He was famous.

The house was in a large street; a great old palace fretted and fantastic, gilded and carved, and majestic, looming over the thread of dull waters in gorgeous sombreness, as it had loomed there in blind Dandolo's own day.

Generally, everything passed near without entering this narrow, silent way; it was out of the way of traffic; there was a great bell tolling heavily from a tower near, and a flock of pigeons in the air, and the scent of lilies—these I noticed at the time. My sight was quite clear, and my brain, too; all I thought of was where I should strike him.

If he would only come out into the air!

I sat down in an angle of the stonework and waited. It was very early; no one noticed me, an old man mooning by the water's side. I watched the house; she, of course, was there, but strangely enough, I never thought of her then—my mind was intent, and solely intent, on him.

When you have said to yourself that you will kill any one, the world only seems to hold yourself and him, and God—who will see the justice done.

The lofty doors of the palace were open; one could see straight up the marble steps into the courts and the halls· they were all vast, and cool, and solitary; not a soul seemed there.

Perhaps the people of the streets had misled me? I rose and climbed the stone stairs, and entered the halls. I suppose some hours had gone by; the sun was vertical, the porphyry shone red in it, and the yellow marble was like brass. I remember that as I trod on them.

There was no sound. I ascended the staircase, lined with the forms of giants and of heroes in the paled and peeling fresco of an heroic time. I held my knife closer, and mounted step after step. What if he heard—so best if it brought him forth. I would have stabbed him before an armed multitude; for I had no desire to live after him.

I went on up the stately stairs and the painted landing-places; there was a long gallery in front at the head of the stairs, and many doors; I opened the one that was nearest to me: he might be there; if not, I might learn of some one.

The chamber was immense, as our rooms are; the light that fell through it was of all kinds of hues from falling through the glass of painted casements.

I went on across half its length, over its polished floor of many-coloured stones; there came on my ear a sudden cry of welcome—low, surprised, and happy as the summer cry of any bird; in the lily-scented air, in the halo of coloured sunlight, she sprang up before me, glad and beautiful as any human thing could ever be, clothed in white, with a golden fillet on her forehead, and at her breast a knot of crimson carnations.

I stood still, stupefied and afraid; I had forgotten her.

"Dear friend! is it you?" she cried, with a pure and happy tone in her voice.

How shall I tell the change that had passed over her? Just

such a change as I had seen when, in my dream, the bronze of the Borghese had blushed and moved and started into sudden life. Not greater the change upon the face of earth when from the still grey silvery dawn, in which the stars are trembling, the glory comes, and the sun shines over the hills.

What is it that Love does to a woman?—without it she only sleeps; with it, alone, she lives.

Never in all my years have I seen happiness so perfect, so exquisite, so eloquent without a word, as was in her face, her air, her very limbs and movements; before, she had been lovely as the statues were, and like them mute and cold, and scarcely human; now her eyes were like the light of day, her mouth was like the dew-wet rose, her whole form seemed to thrill with the grace and the gladness and the glory and the passion of life.

I stood before her stupidly and dumb.

"Dear friend, is it you?" she said, and came and took my hands and smiled.

What could I say to her? I had come to kill him.

"I must have seemed so thankless in my silence," she said, softly. "It hurt me to keep silence—but he wished it so."

I drew my hands away. I hated her to touch me.

"You are happy then!" I said, and was dumb, staring upon her, for there were in her such power, such loveliness, such radiance; and all the while she was looking in my eyes with the sweet candour of a fearless innocence.

"Happy!" she smiled, as she echoed the word.

No doubt it seemed so poor to her, and feeble to measure all she felt. Then all the old pride came into her eyes.

"He loves me!" she said, under her breath; as if that said all.

"Do you remember I wanted to know what happiness was?" she said, after a little while. "Do you remember my asking the girls under the trees by Castel Gondolfo? As if one could ever know until——"

Then the warm colour stole over her face, and she smiled, and the dreamy wondering look I knew so well came into her eyes, and she seemed to forget me.

I stood gripping the handle of my knife. I could not take my gaze from her. She seemed transfigured. To such a creature as this, in the fresh glory of her joy, what could one say of shame and of the world's scorn, and of her wrongs, and of the mockery of women?

Then her eyes came back from their musing towards me, and her thoughts with them.

"And did you come to find me? That is so good; you were always so good, and I seem always thankless. I wished to tell you, but he would not; and Maryx too, it must have seemed to him, also, so thankless. Only now he will know—he will understand.

"You look at me strangely! Are you tired?" she added, as I kept silence. "Why will you stand? Are you angered?"

"Are you happy?" I said, hoarsely. How could I say to her, "I came to kill your seducer!"

"Am I?" she said, very low, under her breath. "What! when he loves me? Do you remember—I was always afraid of Love, because it is all one's life, and one is no more oneself, but breathes through another's lips, and has no will any more, and no force. But now I know; there is no other thing worth living for or dying for—there is no other life. Do you remember—I used to wonder why women looked so happy, and why they used to go and pray with wet eyes, and why the poets wrote, and the singers sang. Now I know—there is only one good on all the earth, and it is more beautiful to love than even to be loved."

Then a sudden blush came all over her cheek and throat, and she paused suddenly, ashamed; as if some beauty of her form had been suddenly lain bare to curious eyes.

"Come and look!" she said, and touched my hand with hers; and it seemed to me as though flame burnt me; and she went on a little way across the chamber, and drew back a curtain of brocade with heavy fringes, and signed me to pass beneath it.

Quite mechanically and stupidly I followed her, and on the other side of the curtain I saw a lovely eight-sided vaulted room, like many of the palace rooms in our own Rome, and here there were marbles white and grey, and clay, and the tools of sculpture; and the light was pouring in from a high casement that faced the sea.

"Look!" she said, and showed me a statue, only in the clay as yet, but very beautiful.

It would be difficult to tell where its infinite beauty lay.

You can describe a picture, but not a statue. Marble is like music: it can never be measured or told of in words. What can any one know of the beauty of the Belvedere Mercury, who has not looked up in its face?

This solitary figure was Love; but the loveliest and noblest Love that ever human hand had fashioned, surpassing even the perfect Thespian Love of Borghese. All the passion of the whole world, and all the dreams of lovers, and all the visions of heaven that have ever come to poets in their sleep, were in the langour of its musing eyes, and in the smile of its closed lips.

"What can all earth and all eternity bestow worth one hour that I give?" this great Love asked you by a look.

Yet the face was only the face of Hilarion; but that face transfigured, as those eyes of hers which worshipped him beheld it; unlike the face of any mortal;—great as godhead, and glorious as the morning.

I stood in silence.

I could have struck the statue down, and cleft it from head to foot, as the false god it was. But then it was god to her.

She looked at it, and then at me, and sank upon a block of stone that stood there near, ruffling back her dusky gold of curls, and smiling, while the carnations fell out from her bosom at Love's feet.

"Look! this he knows that I have done, for he has seen it grow under my hands out of the mere moist earths; and now he *does* believe. Look! you will tell Maryx. It is greater than anything I ever did; that I know; but it is because I look up in his face, and find it there. He is glad, because he knows that it is mine, and he says they will say, 'No girl's hand ever made that.' What does it matter if they think so? he knows! and then when they say that it is beautiful, after all it will be him whom they praise, and if it should live after me, long, long ages, like the Faun, people will not think of me, but only of him, and they will tell one another his name—not mine. And that is what I pray for always. Who can care for fame for oneself alone? But to tell the world in all that Hereafter that one never will see, how beautiful was what we loved, so that even when one is dead, one will seem to live for them, and to serve them—that is almost like immortality. Oh, the gods were good when they gave me that power, for in all the other ages I shall be able to make men see what he is now, and all that he is to me!"

Then she laughed, a sweet little low laughter, the tears of an exceeding joy wet upon her eyelids all the while; and she bent and kissed the feet of the statue.

"Maryx used to say that Love killed Art," she murmured.

"You will tell him now—oh, how I pity him, that he does not know what love is!"

And softly she kissed again the feet of her god.

Then, with a sudden flush over all her throat and bosom, for it was unlike her to show any emotion, or to pour forth thought in open words, she sat still on the block of stone at the base of the Love, with dreaming suffused eyes and silent lips.

"It will be in marble soon," she said, after a space. "I shall carve it all with my own hands, no one shall touch it in any line. I can 'hew the rocks,' you know; Maryx was so good to teach me. This will be great, that I can feel; but then I have had only to look in his face."

What could I say to her? her innocence was so perfect, so perfect her joy and her pride; and to speak to her of the world, and the ways of its men and its women, seemed like a very blasphemy.

And the statue was great.

Perhaps she had only looked in his face, but she had seen it through the greatness of her own passion, and of her own soul.

She rose quickly and put out her hand.

"Come away; he does not wish it to be seen; not yet."

I did not take her hand.

"He is your only law!" I said, and stopped, for how could I say to her all that consumed my heart?

She looked at me in surprise.

"I do not know that any one else even lives," she said, simply.

It was quite true, no doubt.

A great love is an absolute isolation, and an absolute absorption. Nothing lives or moves or breathes, save one life: for one life alone the sun rises and sets, the seasons revolve, the clouds bear rain, and the stars ride on high; the multitudes around cease to exist, or seem but ghostly shades; of all the sounds of earth there is but one voice audible; all past ages have been but the herald of one soul; all eternity can be but its heritage alone.

Oh, children of the world, what know you of such love?—no more than the blind worm creeping to its fellow knows of the morning glory of the day.

CHAPTER XXIV.

I STOOD by the base of the statue, and gazed still stupidly upon her. Her eyes were shining, sweet, and tender, and abstracted, through the glad tears that were upon their lashes.

Whatever else he had done basely, he had made her happy—as yet.

Perhaps she was right: for a few hours of joy one owes the debt of years, and should give a pardon wide and deep as the deep sea.

This Love which she had made in his likeness, the tyrant and compeller of the world, was to her as the angel which brings perfect dreams, and lets the tired sleeper visit heaven;—who could tell her that her god was but a thing of clay? Not I; not I. And yet I could have wept with very tears of blood. She dropped the curtain, and came and stood by me.

"You will not come away?" she said. "Well, never mind, it does not matter for you to see it; you will go home and tell Maryx. Tell him that, if I seem thankless, I have not forgotten all his noble lessons. You will wait with me; stay all day? In half an hour he will be back, and he will be so glad to see you: oh, that I am sure——"

"He will be back soon?" I felt for the knife underneath my shirt.

"Yes; he had only gone to his boat—that pretty ship that is in the harbour."

"The ship with the white sails? I know, I know!"

I laughed aloud: she looked at me surprised, and in a little fear.

"And when the ship sails away without you?" I said, brutally, and laughing still, because the mention of the schooner had broken the bonds of the silence that had held me against my will half paralysed, and I seemed to be again upon the Tyrrhene shore, seeing the white sail fade against the sky. "And when that ship sails without you? The day will come. It always comes. You are my Ariadnê; yet you forget Naxos!

Oh, the day will come! you will kiss the feet of your idol then, and they will not stay; they will go away, away, away, and they will not tarry for your prayers or your tears—ay, it is always so. Two love, and one tires. And you know nothing of that; you who would have love immortal!"

And I laughed again, for it seemed to me so horrible, and I was half mad.

No doubt it would have been kinder had I struck my knife down into her breast with the words unspoken.

All shade of colour forsook her face, only the soft azure of the veins remained, and changed to an ashen grey. She shook with a sudden shiver from head to foot as the name she hated, the name of Ariadnê, fell upon her ear. The icebolt had fallen in her paradise. A scared and terrible fear dilated her eyes that opened wide in the amaze of some suddenly stricken creature.

"And when he leaves you?" I said, with cruel iteration. "Do you remember what you told me once of the woman by the marshes by the sea, who had nothing left by which to remember love save wounds that never healed? That is all his love will leave you by-and-by."

"Ah, never!"

She spoke rather to herself than me. The terror was fading out of her eyes, the blood returning to her face; she was in the sweet bewildered trance of that blind faith which goes wherever it is led, and never asks the end nor dreads the fate. Her love was deathless: how could she know that his was mortal?

"You are cruel," she said, with her mouth quivering, but the old soft, grand courage in her eyes. "We are together for ever; he has said so. But even if—if—I only remembered him, by wounds, what would that change in me? He would *have* loved me. If he would wish to wound me, so he should. I am his own as the dogs are. Think!—he looked at me, and all the world grew beautiful; he touched me, and I was happy—I, who never had been happy in my life. You look at me strangely; you speak harshly; why? I used to think, surely you would be glad——"

I gripped my knife and cursed him in my soul.

How could one say to her the thing that he had made her in man's and woman's sight?

"I thought you would be glad," she said, wistfully, "and I would have told you long ago—myself. I do not know why you

should look so. Perhaps you are angered because I seemed ungrateful to you and Maryx? Perhaps I was so. I have no thought—only of him. What he wished, that I did. Even Rome itself was for me nothing, and the gods—there is only one for me; and he is with me always. And I think the serpents and the apes are gone for ever from the tree, and he only hears the nightingales—now. He tells me so often; very often. Do you remember I used to dream of greatness for myself—ah, what does it matter? I want nothing now. When he looks at me, the gods themselves could give me nothing more."

And the sweet tranquil radiance came back into her eyes, and her thoughts wandered into the memories of this perfect passion which possessed her, and she forgot that I was there.

My throat was choking; my eyes felt blind; my tongue clove to my mouth. I, who knew what that end would be as surely as I knew the day then shining would sink into the earth, I was dumb like a brute beast: I, who had gone to take his life!

Before this love which knew nothing of the laws of mankind, how poor and trite and trivial looked those laws! What could I dare to say to her of shame? Ah! if it had only been for any other's sake! But he,—perhaps he did not lie to her; perhaps he did only hear the nightingales with her beside him; but how soon their song would pall upon his ear; how soon would he sigh for the poisonous kiss of the serpents! I knew! I knew!

I stood heart-broken in the warm light that was falling through the casement and streaming towards her face. What could I say to her? Men harder and sterner, and surer in every way of their own judgment than I was of mine, no doubt would have shaken her with harsh hands from that dream in which she had wandered to her own destruction.

No doubt, a sterner moralist than I would have had no pity, and would have hurled on her all the weight of those bitter truths of which she was so ignorant; would have shown her that pit of earthly scorn upon whose brink she stood; would have torn down all that perfect credulous faith of hers which could have no longer life nor any more lasting root than the flowering creeper born of a summer's sun, and gorgeous as the sunset's hues, and clinging about a ruin mantling decay. Oh yes, no doubt. But I am only weak, and of little wisdom, and never certain that the laws and ways of the world are just, and never capable of long giving pain to any harmless creature, least of all to her.

She seemed to rouse herself with effort to remember I was there, and turned on me her eyes that were suffused and dreamful with happiness, like a young child's with sleep.

"I must have seemed so thankless to you: you were so very good to me," she said, with that serious sweetness of her rare smile that I had used to watch for, as an old dog watches for his young owner's—an old dog that is used to be forgotten, but does not himself forget, though he is old. "I must have seemed so thankless; but he bade me be silent, and I have no law but him. After that night when we walked in Nero's fields, and I went home and learned he loved me;—do you not see I forgot that there was any one in all the world except himself and me? It must always be so—at least, so I think. Oh, how true that poem was! Do you remember how he read it that night after Mozart, amongst the roses, by the fire? What use was endless life, and all the lore of the spirits and the seers, to Sospitra? I was like Sospitra, till he came; always thinking of the stars and the heavens, in the desert, all alone, and always wishing for life eternal, when it is only life *together* that is worth a wish or a prayer. But why do you look at me so? Perhaps you do not understand? Perhaps I am selfish."

This was all that it seemed to her: that I did not understand. Could she see the tears of blood that welled up in my eyes? could she see the blank despair that blinded my sight? could she see the frozen hand that I felt clutching at my heart and benumbing it? I did not understand: that was all that it seemed to her.

She was my Ariadnê, born again to suffer the same fate. I saw the future: she could not. I knew that he would leave her, as surely as the night succeeds the day. I knew that his passion—if passion indeed it were, and not only the mere common vanity of subjugation and possession—would pall on him and fade out, little by little, as the stars fade out of the grey morning skies. I knew, but I had not the courage to tell her.

Men were faithful only to the faithless. But what could she know of this?

"Thinking of the stars and of the heavens in the desert all alone! Yes!" I cried; and the bonds of my silence were unloosed, and the words rushed from my lips like a torrent from between the hills.

"Yes, and never to see the stars any more, and to lose for ever the peace of the desert—that you think is gain! Oh, my dear! what can I say to you? What can I say? You will not

believe if I tell you. I shall seem a liar, and a prophet of false woe. I shall curse when I would bless. What can I say to you? Athene watched over you. You were of those who dwell alone, but whom the gods are with. You had the clue and the sword, and they are nothing to you; you loose them both at his word, at the mere breath of his lips, and know no god but his idle law, that shifts as the wind of the sea. And you count that gain? Oh, just Heaven! Oh, my dear, my heart is broken; how can I tell you? One man loved you who was great and good, to whom you were a sacred thing, who would have lifted you up in heaven, and never have touched too roughly a single hair of your head; and you saw him no more than the very earth that you trod: he was less to you than the marbles he wrought in; and he suffers; and what do you care? You have had the greatest wrong that a woman can have, and you think it the greatest good, the sweetest gift! He has torn your whole life down as a cruel hand tears a rose in the morning light; and you rejoice! For what do you know? He will kill your soul, and still you will kiss his hand. Some women are so. When he leaves you, what will you do? For you, there will only be death. The weak are consoled, but the strong never. What will you do? What will you do? You are like a child that culls flowers at the edge of a snake's breeding pit. He waked you—yes!—to send you in a deeper sleep, blind and dumb to everything but his will. Nay, nay! that is not your fault. Love does not come at will; and of goodness it is not born, nor of gratitude, nor of any right or reason on the earth. Only that you should have had no thought of us—no thought at all—only of him by whom your ruin comes: that seems hard! Ay, it is hard. You stood just so in my dream, and you hesitated between the flower of passion and the flower of death. Ah, well might Love laugh; they grow on the same bough; Love knows that. Oh, my dear, my dear, I come too late! Look! He has done worse than murder, for that only kills the body; but he has killed the soul in you. He will crush out all that came to you from heaven; all your mind, and your hopes, and your dreams, and all the mystery in you, that we poor half-dumb fools call genius, and that made the common daylight above you full of all beautiful shapes and visions that our duller eyes could not see as you went. He has done worse than murder, and I came to take his life. Ay, I would slay him now as I would strangle the snake in my path. And even for this I come too late. I

cannot do you even this poor last service! To strike him dead would only be to strike you too. I come too late! Take my knife, lest I should see him—take it;—till he leaves you I will wait."

I drew the fine, thin blade across my knee, and broke it in two pieces, and threw the two halves at her feet.

Then I turned without looking once at her, and went away.

I do not know how the day waned and passed; the skies seemed red with fire, and the canals with blood. I do not know how I found my road over the marble floors and out into the air. I only remember that I felt my way feebly with my hands, as though the golden sunlight were all darkness, and that I groped my way down the steps and out under an angle of the masonry, staring stupidly upon the gliding waters.

I do not know whether a minute had gone by, or many hours, when some shivering sense of sound made me look up at the casement above, a high vast casement fretted with dusky gold and many colours, and all kinds of sculptured stone. The sun was making a glory as of jewels on its painted panes. Some of them were open; I could see within the chamber Hilarion's fair and delicate head, and his face drooped with a soft smile. I could see her with all her loveliness melting, as it were, into his embrace, and see her mouth meet his.

If I had not broken the steel!——

I rose from the stones and cursed them, and departed from the place as the moon rose.

CHAPTER XXV.

WHEN I went back to my place by Ponte Sisto, I think the Faun in the fountain was dead or gone. I never heard him any more; I never have heard him ever again.

Is Nature kind or cruel? Who can tell?

The cyclone comes, or the earthquake; the great wave rises and swallows the cities and the villages, and goes back whence it came; the earth yawns and devours the pretty towns and the sleeping children, the gardens where the lovers were sitting, and

the churches where women prayed, and then the morass dries up and the gulf unites again. Men build afresh, and the grass grows, and the trees, and all the flowering seasons come back as of old. But the dead are dead: nothing changes that!

As it is with the earth, so it is with our life; our own poor, short, little life, that is all we can really call our own.

Calamities shatter, and despair engulfs it; and yet after a time the chasm seems to close; the storm wave seems to roll back; the leaves and the grass return; and we make new dwellings. That is, the daily ways of living are resumed, and the common tricks of our speech and act are as they used to be before disaster came upon us. Then wise people say, he or she has "got over it." Alas, alas! the drowned children will not come back to us; the love that was struck down, the prayer that was silenced, the altar that was ruined, the garden that was ravished, they are all gone for ever,—for ever,—for ever! Yet we live; because grief does not always kill, and often does not speak.

I went back to my stall, and to Palès, because habit is strong and I was old.

The people spared me, and asked few questions. There is more kindness than we think in human nature; at least when it has nothing to gain by being otherwise than kind.

And I began to stitch leather, though all around me seemed to have grown grey and black, and the voices of the merry crowds hurt me as a finger hurts, that lightly and roughly touches a deep wound. It is hard for us when we shrink from the innocent laughter of others, and when the cloudy day seems kinder than the sunshine.

I shut the shutters of my window that looked upon the river, and locked the door of the chamber. It seemed to me accursed.

From the moment that Maryx and I saw the sail against the sky, white as a gull's wing—the s il that should have been sable as the night—no word passed his lips or mine to one another. He would not speak. I dared not. There are some wrongs, some griefs, so dire that you cannot put words to them.

When, timidly, after many d ys, I ventured up through the aloes and the myrtle to his house, being afraid of what I had seen upon his face that day by the sea-shore, I saw in the first chamber a statue thrown down, broken and headless; the head was only a little mound of whit and grey marble dust.

The old man, Giulio, came and stood by me. Tears rolled down his cheeks. I envied them.

"My master did that," he said; "did it the night he returned. He struck it down with a mallet, blow after blow. The beautiful thing! It seemed like a murder."

The statue was what had been the Nausicaa's. I turned away, I dared not ask for him.

"He works as usual," said Giulio.

The little old brown woman tottered in, more than ever like a dull dusky leaf that a breeze blows about feebly. She shook me gently, and pointed to the fallen marble.

"It is as I told you it would be; the marble has killed him," said his mother. "Yes; he works, he breathes, he moves, he speaks. There is nothing to see, perhaps—not for others; but he is dead for all that. I am his mother, and I know——"

I crept away sick, as with some remorse, and feeling as though guilty of some heavy sin. Why had I meddled with Fortune, the maker and mocker of men? Why had I dared to compel Fate that day when he had paused by me to take up the Wingless Love?

What was my grief beside his? and what my wrong? All the great gifts of his great soul he had given; and they had been uncounted, and wasted, like water spilled upon the ground.

I crept through the myrtles downward, away from the house where the statue lay shattered. The earliest of the nightingales of the year was beginning her lay in some leafy covert hard by, but never would he hear music in their piping again; never, never: any more than I should hear the song of the Faun in the fountain.

For the song that we hear with our ears is only the song that is sung in our hearts.

And his heart, I knew, would be for ever empty and silent, like a temple that has been burned with fire, and left standing, pitiful and terrible, in mockery of a lost religion, and of a forsaken god.

CHAPTER XXVI.

The months wore on; those colourless, long, slow-footed paces of time, so heavy as they pass, so dead a blank to remember and try to number, which all men and all women know into whose life has come any great grief; spaces of time where one lives and moves, and eats and drinks, and sleeps, ay, and even may laugh perhaps (heaven help one!), and yet all the while, as the mother of Maryx said, one is dead—quite dead—for any pulse of real bright life that beats in us.

"What is she to you?" my good friends of the Rione said. "Only a stray girl, come and gone—no more; have reason."

Ay, truly she was no more to me, and yet she had taken with her all the gladness I had had and all the peace; and when I sat stitching leather for old Rome the world seemed very dark.

I remained fettered, as the poor are fettered, hand and foot to the soil by poverty.

I had no other Hermes to sell.

I stayed by my stall, stitching and seeing nothing that I did, and doing my work so ill that people were angry and began to forsake me entirely. Those very poor folks whose sandals and shoes I had always cobbled for nothing but good-will being the first and loudest to say that I was purblind.

It did not matter very much; I wanted so very little for myself, and I could always get enough food for the dog, any day, from Pippo's stove; only, all the peace of my simple life was gone, and gone for ever. It seems hard when one does no wrong, and has no envy or ill-feeling of any kind, and only takes delight in the mere open air and the mere movement of life, and the charm of the arts and the innocent mysteries of study and antiquity—it seems hard, I say, when these things are one's joy and can hurt no one, to have all one's pleasure in them dashed out of one's keeping like a slender glass that is shivered on the ground.

It seems hard.

But I tried to think that it did not matter. I was old, and it was only dying a little before my time to have the days become so grey and empty, and the sky seem only a hollow gourd, and the trouble of birth and of death feel too great for the short, sad, hurried, impotent handful of years that divide the two; and I stayed on at my stall, and the fountain was only a confused and tiresome sound, and the hastening of the people's feet over the bridge seemed cruel—why did they hasten when mine could not?—and all I sat thinking of was of my dream in Borghese that summer noon when the white statues had awakened and spoken.

It was only a dream. No, of course; it was only a dream. Often I went there, and would have called to them to have mercy; but they were only marble; the beautiful Thespian Love was mute as stone, and the Roman woman on her bier kept the flowers of oblivion close folded in her hands and would not yield them.

It had been only a dream; only a dream.

"Oh, God! must she suffer for that?" I cried always in my heart; and wandered Rome stupidly; and, if a son can hate his mother most revered, almost I hated the stones of Rome. For I was sure that Hilarion had left, or would leave, her; and who could tell whether she were living or dead?

They who live after Naxos are base; and she was holy as any creature sleeping in a virgin martyr's tomb in the womb of the earth, under the city, laid to rest in the hope of Christ.

Ah, yes! for a great love is a great holiness. Ye fools and pharisees have said otherwise, because it is as far beyond you as the stars of the night.

Rome itself seemed to me to shrivel and grow small, lying in the circle of the mountains dead as the nymph Canens had lain dead by Tiber's side.

Sometimes I would climb up the winding road, and stand under the cedars, and look at the sea from the heights above the city, and wish and wish——

But I was old and poor.

Palès and I could only look till the blue gleam faded into the dusk of night, and go back wearily with our heads drooped to our corner by the fountain, the fountain in which there was no music for us now, but only the noisy gushing of water restless to escape, and the sharp ring of the women's brazen jars.

Sometimes I would go and stand before my lost Hermes.

"That was mine once," I said to a stranger who was calling it most lovely where it stood on the mosaic floors, bathed in the sunlight.

He looked at me in contempt, and went and spoke to one of the Swiss guards, thinking me mad or drunk, no doubt.

I never dared, I have said, to name her to Maryx—never. There was a look on his face when I passed him by in the streets that daunted one into fear and silence.

But one night after several months, I came upon him suddenly in the dead silence of the Flavian amphitheatre.

It was midnight and moonlight: the plants that then grew like a green wreath in the travertine stood out clear in every stem and leaf against the cold blue light of the skies; the water glistened in the underground cells; the newt ran and the toad squatted in the seat of emperors.

I know not what in the silence and the solemnity of the awful place opened my lips. Stopping him, as he would have passed me, we two alone in the vast space, I told him all that I had seen at Venice, and all that I had gone thither meaning to do.

He shrank with an irrepressible gesture at the first word, as a man shrinks when a nerve in his flesh is laid bare; then he stood still and heard me to the end.

He was a very proud man, and he had never said to her, or to me, or to any one, that he had loved her.

He heard me in patience to the end; then he said slowly, with the paleness of a great suppressed emotion on his face.

"Yes; if one could strike him without striking her, do you think I would have let him live a day? Not that we have any right—you and I. We are nothing to her! You forget. We never had any hold on her—not even as her friends. We gave her all we had to give; it counted nothing; that was not our fault, nor hers. We missed the way, he found it."

Then he was silent.

He had found it; yes, he who found it without effort, cost, or sacrifice, and would turn aside from it when another path beguiled him, as easily as a child runs a little way through the daisies in a flowering meadow and then tires of it, he knows not why, and throws his gathered blossoms down, and runs away!

Maryx looked up at the skies where the moon was sailing high in a clear space where the storm-wreath of the clouds had parted and left it free.

As its light fell on his features, one saw how aged they were and worn, with all the bold and noble cast of them fatigued and hardened, and their lines deepened like the channel of a river after a heavy flood. He had suffered very terribly; this man who had owned to no suffering save such as the ruthless blows of his mallet on his own marble had shown when he had shattered the Nausicaa.

It was all still about us. The mighty place was in deep shadow. The stations of Christ were blacker than all the rest, and the cross in the midst was shrouded in gloom, as though it were the very hour of the Crucifixion.

Maryx, whose hand leaned on it, shook it with the force of a sudden shudder that ran through him.

"We must wait. When he leaves her, then——"

The Cross of Christ has been called in witness of many an oath of vengeance, but it never heard one more just than the one that was then sworn mutely by it.

He waited—that was all. Vengeance only demands a long patience.

And I—remembering—felt that he would have few years to wait.

CHAPTER XXVII.

So the months passed by and became years, fulfilling their course with that terrible speed which sows the earth so thick with graves.

I stitched on for the people of Rome, and the people said "He grows old; he has no sport in him; let him be;" and very often therefore passed me by to hurry to another stall before the old stone mouth of Truth, where there was a newly-come cobbler of leather who had a very comical wit and had very cheap prices; I do not know whether his work wore well. But I made enough to live on and get bread for Palès. That sufficed.

Very often I would go and look at my lost Hermes in the gallery of the Vatican. I might as well never have sold him; but we know everything too late.

And when the gaping foreign crowds, all frothy talk, and not a shred of knowledge or of reverence amidst them, gathered round the pedestal he stood on, and praised him, I wanted to cry out to them, "Stand aside, ye fools—he is mine."

But he was not mine any more.

Sometimes I used to wonder, would she be sorry if she knew that I had lost him?

But no doubt he was better there, and more fittingly in place with the Jupiter Anxur in the palace of the Pope. I had never been great enough for him; I had only loved him, and what use is that?

Time wore away, I say, and took the days and the weeks and the months, and Rome was swept with the by-winds of winter and scorched with the sand-blasts of the summer, and its travertine and its porphyry, and its old brick that has the hues of porphyry, were transfigured into matchless glory with every sun that set; and my Ariadnê came thither no more.

Where was she? I knew not. She was not forsaken, since Maryx stayed on in the city always, and I knew well that he would not forget that unuttered oath by the Cross.

He was shut for ever in his room at work, they said. To my sight, all the greatness had gone out of his work. But the world did not see this. Before a great fame the world is a myope.

The cunning of his hand, and the force of it, and the grace, were all there as of old, of course; for the consummate artist, by long mastery of his art, does acquire at last what is almost a mechanical aptitude, and can scarcely do ill, so far as mere form goes, even working with blind eyes. But the soul of all art lies in the artist's own delight in it; and that was now lacking for ever in his. These things that he created had no joy for him.

Men and women, losing the thing they love, lose much, but the artist loses far more; for him are slaughtered all the children of his dreams, and from him are driven all the fair companions of his solitude.

Maryx laboured by day and by night in his house upon the Golden Hill; but it was labour, it was no more creation, and the delight of creation. He worked from habit, from pride, to save himself perhaps from madness; for there is no friend or physician like work; but his old mother had said rightly—he was like a dead man. He had never spoken any word to me of Giojà since that night in the amphitheatre. Indeed, I saw him

but seldom. I felt that my presence was pain to him, and I felt remorse. Why had I compelled Fortune and brought this evil upon him in the midst of his lofty, peaceful, and victorious life? We are sorry meddlers, and play with Fate too much.

He had never reproached me; but for that very forbearance my own conscience but rebuked me the more.

One day I met him in the park of the Pamfili Doria: they are very grand and lovely, these woods, with their slopes of grass that are like the moorlands of the north, and their old gnarled oaks, and their empurpled hoards of violets, that are so many that you cannot tread there a step in winter without crushing half a hundred little fragrant hooded heads.

I had gone on an errand with a gardener's hobnailed shoes; he was walking against the wind, as men walk who would escape from ghosts that will keep pace with them, ghosts that the sunlight never scares away.

He almost struck against me as he passed, and, pausing, recognised me.

It was twilight in a wintry eve; the sea-breeze was sweeping keen and cold through the branches of the pines; the swans and the statues by the water's edge looked chill and shadowy; the bold uplands of the shelving turf were crisp with glistening frost; the owls were hooting.

He looked at me in the sad twilight which lasts but such a little moment here in Rome.

"It is you!" he said with a gentle voice. "My old friend, have I been neglectful of you or unkind? I have not seen you for so long. But if there be anything you ever want of me——"

"Nay, there is nothing," I said to him. "And we only hurt one another. We both are waiting——"

Then I stopped, afraid that I should wound him; for he was very proud in some things.

"Come home with me now," he said abruptly, taking no notice of my last words. "Come home with me. You shall see my work. Rome holds no better critic."

Then he turned, and we went downwards through the park, under the broad branches of the ilexes, and the owls flapped in our faces, and the darkness fell, and the swans went off the water to their nests amongst the reeds; and we walked together through the gates and to his own house, which was not far distant, and where I had never been since the day that I had seen the copy of the Nausicaa shattered on the floor.

The place was almost dark. We entered his studio and he struck a light, and I began to see the glimmer of the marbles and the plaster's whiteness. We had walked quite in silence, what could we say to one another, he and I?

He drew the shrouding cloths off a great group, and the lights from above fell on it.

Its name matters nothing; it stands to-day before the senate-house of a great nation; it was a composition from the heroic ages. It was majestic, pure, and solemn; there was not a false line in it nor a weak one; it had the consummate ease and strength that only the trained hand of a perfect master can command; yet——

What was lacking in it?

It was hard to tell. But it was lifeless. It was work, composition, not art. It was like a dead body from which the soul has fled. I looked at it in silence.

"Well?" he asked, and watched my face. Then, before I could measure my words to tell the truth, yet veil it, he, scanning my face, read my mind and cast the cloths back again and laughed aloud; a laugh that I can hear still when I sit and think and the night is quiet.

"Ah, it does not deceive you any more than me! You see it aright. It is imposture. It will cheat the world. It cannot cheat you or me. It is a lie. Look at it; it is the first thing I ever sold to any man that has no shadow of myself put into it, no beauty in my sight, no preciousness or gladness for me, no thought or soul of mine blent with it to make it as strong and holy as a man's labours can be. It is a lie. It is not art; it is cold, hard, joyless, measured, mechanical—like any stone creature that the copyist sits and chips from some plaster model of the galleries, and calls a god! I always thought so, felt so. Who knows our work as we, the makers, do? And now I am certain, looking on your face. Hush! Do not speak. Tell me no lies. The thing is lie enough."

I was silent.

It was of no use to seek to foist on him the empty phrases of an artificial compliment; he would have seen through them and despised me.

The light from above fell on the half-shrouded group and on his face; his eyes had a terrible anguish in them, such as one could picture in a wounded lion's that feels his mighty strength ebbing away and cannot rise again

The lamp that he held he dashed upon the floor; the flame was extinguished on the stone.

"Look at that light!" he said. "A moment, less than a moment, and it is quenched—just falling; that is the light in us, who think ourselves the light of the world. One blow, and we are in darkness for ever. We make Zeus in rage, and Christ with pity; we should make them both only laughing; any god must laugh. Look! men have called me great, and stronger than most of them I may have been; and they will go on calling me great and great everything that I do, sheerly from habit's sake, and the force of memories, and the imitation of numbers. But for me, I know very well I shall never be great any more. The cunning may stay in my hand, but the soul is gone out of my body, and the art in me is dead. I am an artist no more. No more!"

He was silent a little while, gazing out through the unshuttered windows into the starless night; the quenched lamp lay at his feet.

"Look!" he said suddenly, all the long-imprisoned suffering of so many months of silence breaking loose like a river long pent up and breaking its banks. "Look! From a little lad, all I cared for was art. Going behind my mule over the stony ground, I saw only the images I had seen in the churches and the faces of the gods and the saints. Starving and homeless in Paris, I was happy as a bird of the air, because the day showed me beautiful shapes, and by night in sleep I saw lovelier still. When fame came to me, and the praises of men and their triumphs, I was glad because by such means I could give my years to the studies I loved, and the visions of my brain in palpable form to the people. Never once was I proud with the pride of a fool: but I was glad—ah, God! I was glad. The stubborn stone obeyed me, submissive as a slave; I delighted in my strength; I knew my mastery; my labour was beautiful to me, and waking I thought of it and went to it as to the sweetest mistress that could smile on earth. When one loves an art, it is the love of the creator and of the offspring both in one; it is the joy of the lover and of the child; when it fails us, what can the whole world give? And now in me it is dead—dead—dead. I care for the marble no more than the workman that hews it for daily bread. It says nothing to me now. It is blank and cold, and I curse it. I shall never make it speak any more. I am palsied before I am old!"

Then his head drooped upon his breast; he dropped down on the bench beside him, and covered his face with his hands.

He had forgotten that I was there.

I went away in silence and left him, not to see a great man weep.

What comfort could one give to him?

Verily the sculptors of the Greeks were right. Love burns up the soul.

CHAPTER XXVIII.

DAYS and weeks and months went by, for time devours so fast. It was again full summer—the fierce fair summer of the south, and I was sitting vacantly one night by the stall, with the lamp swinging on its cord above my head, and the din of the laughter, and the swish of the oars in the water, and the light low chords of the twanging guitars, and the merry steps of the young men and maidens on the bridge, all sounding discordant and hateful on my ears, as they had always in the old time sounded welcome and musical; and this, I do think, as I have said before, is one of the unkindest things of sorrow, that it makes us almost loathe the gay and innocent mirth of others.

I was sitting so, I say, with the moonlight all silvery about my feet, and the people around me dancing our beautiful native saltarello, that, since the foreigners have come in such shoals, our lads and lasses have grown almost ashamed of, learning to jig and jump instead, with no more grace than the stranger from over sea: for want of grace is progress too, it seems. And now, being summer, there were no foreigners to look on and make them blush for being graceful, so they danced that perfect dance in the space betwixt the fountain and the street, and I sat aloof and weary in the moonlight, with the sound of the tambourines thumping through my brain.

Suddenly a hand fell on my shoulder. It was that of Maryx.

"I am going away. Here I shall lose my brain before I lose

my life. When one is strong, one does not die. You have seen —I am like a paralytic. Perhaps travel may do something. You will not speak of me. Go and visit my mother. I shall be away till I feel some force to work, or until——"

He did not end his phrase, but I understood it as it stood. He meant until he heard that she had been forsaken. I could say nothing to him. I knew that he was no longer himself.

He looked at my Apollo Sandaliarius, the little white figure that he had sculptured in the days of his youth, when he had been a lustrous-eyed, eager-limbed lad, filled with a noble and buoyant fervour of life, and that faith in his own strength which compels the destiny it craves.

A great anguish came into his eyes.

"Ah! to go back five and twenty years;—who would not give his very soul to do it! Well, I have all I wished for then; and what use is it?"

Then, as if ashamed, he paused, and added, in a colder, calmer voice,—

"I cannot tell where I may go—the east, most likely. Comfort my mother. You are a good man. Farewell, my friend."

He pressed my hand, and left me.

The sky seemed emptier, the world seemed greyer, than before. But he did wisely to go—that I knew. Here, inaction and the desperate pain of failing force would gnaw at his very vitals, till he would curse himself and weep before the genius of his own works, as did your northern Swift. For there can be nothing so terrible as to see your soul dead, whilst yet your body still lives.

So I was left alone in the city, and the days and weeks and months crept slowly on; "ohne Hast, ohne Rast," as the German says of the stars. Only, when one has neither the eager joy of haste, nor the serene joy of rest, life is but a poor and wearisome thing that crawls foot-sore, like a galled mule on a stony way.

The mother of Maryx, left all alone on the Golden Hill, did not murmur; she understood few things, but she understood why he was gone.

"I always said that it would be so. I always said it," she muttered, with her feeble hands feeling the wooden cross at her neck, that she had worn ever since her first communion, when she had been a little bright brown-eyed girl, no doubt, clanking in her wooden shoes over the sunburnt fields. "You see,

because he had mastered that wicked thing so long, and struck it and hewn it into any shape he chose, and made a slave of it, he thought it never could harm him; but I knew. His father used to laugh and say, 'How can it hurt me? It is I who hurt it, hewing it out of its caverns, and breaking it up into atoms.' But all the same, one day it had its revenge—and crushed him. He was only a common rough hewer of stone. Oh, I know! And my son is great, and a kind of king in his way; but it is all the same—the marble does not forgive. It bides its time, then it strikes in its turn."

And she accepted what it had brought her, with the kind of numbness of mingled despair and patience which is the peasant's form of resignation to the will of God. In her fancy, the marble never forgave its masters; in mine, I thought, "What art ever forgives its followers, when they open their eyes to behold any beauty outside its own?"

Love art alone, forsaking all other loves, and she will make you happy, with a happiness that shall defy the seasons and the sorrows of time, the pains of the vulgar and the changes of fortune, and be with you day and night, a light that is never dim. But mingle with it any human love—and art will look for ever at you with the eyes of Christ when he looked at the faithless follower as the cock crew.

CHAPTER XXIX.

Thus time went on, and the old woman span her flax in the beautiful house on the hill, and grew feebler and a little blind; and I, down in my corner by the fountain, worked for my bread in torrid summers and in icy winters, and grew gloomy, they said, and pleased but few; and my neighbours said, "What did it matter to you?—to you nothing happened. It was not as if she had been your daughter."

And, indeed, nothing had happened to me, of course; only all the simple pleasures of life were dead and gone, and the

wrinkled faces of the old manuscripts said nothing to me, and the spell of the arts for me was broken; and I should have cared nothing though my foot had laid bare all the jewels of the Faustines, or the lost Cupid of Praxiteles.

For a great sorrow is like that subtle poison which is carried by a carrion-fly in summer, and the paralysis of it runs through all the nerves, and the nearest and the most distant are alike stricken and numb.

It is murder to take life; but perhaps to take away all the joy of life is a more cruel thing, in real truth.

How was it with her? Was the false and faithless joy that had allured her gone from her? Was she left alone?

I sat and wondered, till the sunlight on the stones seemed to scorch my eyes blind, and the sweet noise of the falling water sounded hideous.

Rome is so beautiful when it lies under the splendour of its heavens of light; but it had ceased to be anything to me save a prison that held my body, while my sick soul was far away over strange lands, seeking—seeking——

I had little hope that he would be faithful to her, or merciful in any way; yet sometimes I fancied that such perfect love from her, and her entire innocence of evil, and her many high and rare gifts, might so gain even on him, that it would not be quite with her as it had been with others. So I fancied, hoping against hope, and sitting stitching by my old place under the shadow of the old ecclesiastical walls.

Hilarion came no more to Rome.

It was not fear that kept him away; he was one of the boldest of men. It was, probably, that dislike to moral pain, and instinctive avoidance of it, which were very strong in his temperament. It was also, perhaps, some pang of conscience; for his conscience was always fully awake to the evil he did, and the worst thing in him was that, knowing it, he deliberately selected it. But then, indeed, to him and to his school there is no clear right and no clear wrong in anything. All men were irresponsible in his sight, being born without any will of their own, and all adrift in a chaotic darkness that had no beginning or end.

Hilarion came no more to Rome, and the beauty of Daïla was wasted on the empty air and on the peasants, who had no eyes to behold it, but only saw the locust on the wheat-stalk, the beetle in the vine-leaf, the fever mist in the reedy places by

the rivers, and all the other sore and various curses of their daily lives.

If any asked for news of him there, they always said that they knew nothing. Perhaps it was true. Hilarion was one of those who have many houses in many lands, but have no home.

They are common in your generation.

Of little Amphion, also, I had seen no more since that fat night.

All about me the life was unchanged. My neighbour gambled at trisella and zecchinetto as of old; Ersilia scolded and laboured, with a wrinkle the more betwixt her black brows; Pippo cooked, and Pipistrello played; and the youngsters skipped upon the stones to the twanging of lute and viol and the thump of tambourine; and the nightingales sang in the gardens; and the goats rang their bells with early daylight down the streets.

But to me all the world seemed dead—dead as Nero's slaughtered millions were beneath the soil.

A year had gone by since Maryx had left Rome, and it was summer again—full summer, with all the people going out, in merry honest fooling, to the country; and the lusty-lunged reapers coming through the streets all the night long, singing, with the tasselled corn in their hair, and the poppies behind their ears.

Ah, the poppies!—Love's gift.

When I saw them I grew more heart-sick than before, and all the loud sonorous reaping-songs beat on my ears with a stupid hateful sound.

One night they came by me over the bridge, louder and more mirthful than ever, and the girls of our streets were dancing the saltarella with some young fisher-fellows from the boats below, and all of a sudden the harmless, noisy joyousness of it all smote me so sharply that I could not bear it any longer, and I rose up and walked away.

All the day long, and some time before, I do not know why it was, but a sudden restlessness had seized on me, and that kind of feeling of something strange about me which one has at times; nervous depression, wise men say, and weak men call such things presentiments.

I felt a loathing of those blithe guitars and shaking tambourines, and handsome maidens; I rose and called Palès, and strolled away in the white still night along the familiar ways.

By night Rome is still a city for the gods; the shadows veil its wounds, the lustre silvers all its stones; its silence is haunted as no other silence is; if you have faith, there where the dark gloss of the laurel brushes the marble as in Agrippa's time, you will see the Immortals passing by chained with dead leaves and weeping. In earlier days I had seen them; days when no human affection chained my thoughts to earth: now I went over the stones bent and blind, and only thinking—thinking—thinking. When we can only think and cannot dream, then truly we are old.

I went along through the Forum, and past the arch of Trajan, and through Constantine's, out on that broad road between the mulberry-trees, with the ruins of the innumerable temples standing everywhere amidst the fields and gardens, the reaped corn and the ripening cherries.

The road curves to the left, as every one knows, and goes to the baths of the poor madman, Caracalla; and there are shapeless mounds of brick and stone and rubble everywhere amongst the turf and the tilled soil, and you know that they were all sacred one day, and beautiful, with domes and porticoes, and columns and high springing arches, and thronging multitudes worshipping in them, and the smoke of sacrifice ascending, and the great statues standing with serene faces immutable and calm amidst the uproar of emotion and of prayer.

The night was still and luminous; a million stars were shining in the violet blue above; all was quiet, with only the sound of hooting owls that flew from the looming mass of the Flavian theatre behind me in the dark. I thought of the broad burning noons, of the gathered people, of the knife of the priest, of the fall of the ox, of the fountain of blood, of the frenzy of death, of the worship of Attis, of all that came with the accursed eastern races to ruin Rome with its lusts.

I thought and shuddered and went on and forgot them: what mattered the fall of the gods or the nations?—I had not been able to keep pure and in safety one short human life.

It was midsummer time, and the scents of the land were all sweet and heavy about me, the reaped wheat leaned against the broken altar, and the cut clover was piled by the forsaken lararia; the air was alight and alive with fireflies, and the crickets alone answered the owls singing amongst the stalks of the corn.

The mighty red masses of the baths rose in sight; they were not red now, but brown and grey, stripped of their marbles, and

bare in the moonlight, with the bushes blowing on their summits, and the many things that only venture forth by night, creeping over the mosaic floors that once had felt so many million soft, white, useless feet glistening with the unguents and the perfumes there.

In that warm summer night the scents of the innumerable bird-sown plants and flowers were sweet upon the night as ever was the stream of fragrance poured over patrician limbs in these recesses, now so dark and drear and given over to the stoat and the newt, in that eternal irony of mortal fame which seems always to laugh aloud through Rome.

It was a hiding-place for thieves in that time, but I could have no fear, I, old and poor, without a coin of value on me. I walked through it, unthinking; thinking only of that long-abiding sorrow which had fallen upon me and others because I had meddled with the great goddess of Præneste.

Now at that time the place was perilous and quite unguarded; beggars slept there, and thieves also if they chose, and so it was not strange that away from the broad moonlight, just where the mosaic pavement slopes down under the fragment of marble cornice in the central hall, there were rough work and some evil thing being done; there was an old man being held and searched by two sturdy half-clad rogues.

I was old too, but very strong, and I had my knife; the thieves were but two; they fled without my touching them thinking the guards were behind me—fled, and having no wound worse than that from Palès' sharp teeth. The old man muttered many curses and few blessings; he had been robbed of a few copper coins; he was very poor, he said; looking in his haggard face I saw that he was the old man, Ben Sulim, of the Ghetto.

I gave him back his curses, and set him with his face to the moonlight, and bade him be gone.

Then he would have thanked me, but I strode away from him out over the vineyards where there used to be all those open marble courts for the Romans' sports and daily gossiping. A hare ran before me into a sheaf of corn, a broad-winged owl flew slowly like a puff of smoke borne on a slow wind; they were all that held the place of the Roman people now.

I walked homeward by many a mile across the pale Campagna, sweet with flowering thyme, and rife with fever, and backward into Rome by way of the Lateran church and palace:

it was full dawn when I reached my stall and slept. I thought no more of the accident of the night: save now and then I wished I had not meddled with the thieves.

It was far into the vintage month, and the first dreariness of rain was falling, when a messenger came to me from the Fiumara, and bade me, as a good and Christian man, go down into the Ghetto to see a dying man who asked for me. At first I would not go; then thought of her and went: heaven forgive me for such hardness of soul! Before death all men have title to our help.

I went, indeed I hastened, for I knew not what it might not bode for her; but with all my haste I was too late: my momentary hardness and reluctance had made me too late: the old man was in the agonies of death when I climbed to his wretched door, and though his sunken eyes looked at me with pain, he could not speak, and in a few seconds more his last breath passed his lips.

It was in squalor, nakedness, and misery that he died; died, indeed, they said, rather of want of food, and from unnatural deprivations of all kinds, than of any malady.

Yet there was a notary waiting there; and when he, indeed, lay stark and lifeless and grey in death's rigidity upon the planks of his miserable bed, the man said, softly—for men who are not reverent of death are reverent of wealth—"He was the richest man in Ghetto."

And thus it proved.

What he would have said to me, no man could tell; but by all the people round him his large possessions had been long suspected.

The Syrian Jew had died as so many a miser has died in this world, a starved and wretched skeleton, but leaving a mass of wealth behind him, and no word of any kind to will it, for death had come upon him unawares, and no doubt like all men whose treasures lie in things of earth, the very thought of death had always been shunned, and put away, by him.

There were a great outcry in the place, and great agitation, for he had lived and died a bad and cruel man, and been much hated even by his own people, and had always been thought an usurer; and now it seemed there was no kind of wealth he had not owned in secret, gold and silver, scrip and bond, and, though none of his persuasion can own house or land in Rome, many of those Ghetto leases, one of which is thought a fine fair fortune.

Would the wealth all fall to the State, lapse to the Church?

That was the excitement of the quarter as, later on next day, when the lean frightful body of him had been shovelled into the earth of their burial place going towards Aventine, the men of law spent long hours unearthing all the evidences of his riches, and though sunset was near at hand, yet were far off the close of their labours, searching and sealing from morn to eve.

I said nothing to any one, but went home; got those papers which she had first put in my hands in those early days when she had lived under the shadow of my Hermes; and took them to those chambers in the Vatican where dwelt my mighty friend, who had risen to be a cardinal, and very mighty and powerful, and was a good and generous man withal;—for in those days one could do nothing without a voice from the Vatican, and with it could do everything in Rome.

He was a good man, and a great man, and had never forgotten that but for my poor service to him in his youth, he in all likelihood would never have lived to wear the broad scarlet hat above his level classic brows.

He was kind; he was even interested; he kept the matter in his own hands; he could propel the law, and fulfil it; in a word, he so acted that the chief treasures of the dead man awaited her, whenever she should claim them.

I only told him I had lost her, and all clue to her. I could not tell him of Hilarion.

Why do all things come too late?

The eastern people say the gods sit above and laugh to see the woe and perplexity and pain of men; verily, devils themselves might weep before those two little words—too late.

When he told me that this should certainly be hers, that if I could find her living, and bring her into Rome, she should become possessor of all this strange accursed wealth, got together, none knew how, throughout a long lonely life of horrible barrenness, and hatred of all human things,—when he told me, I say, I felt giddy.

I remember coming out from his gracious presence, and passing down those gigantic staircases between the Swiss in their yellow jerkins and their cuirasses of steel, and going out along the long stone passages into the daylight like a drunken man.

Had it been but a little earlier, only a little earlier! Had it come only just ere the earth had had time to bear and blossom and be reaped for harvests these three short summers!

What was the shield of Athene beside what the shield of gold would have been?

What power had love or the arts to shelter, compared with what the mere force of wealth would have had?

I cursed the dead man in his grave.

Brutal it might be, but I was so: brutal as one may be who in savage wars sees the daughter of his heart and hearth dishonoured and lying lifeless, with a sword thrust in her breast, when so little could have saved her—just a moment—just a word!

I went down out of the Vatican into the noble sunlit square, where in a high west wind the fountains were tossing like waves of the sea all foam, and blown aloft in a storm; and the black shadow of the mighty obelisk was travelling slowly across the whiteness of the place like the shadow of the arm of Time.

Within, in the Sistine vaults, there were the multitudes come to judgment, and the opening heavens, and the yawning graves, and all the awful greatness that is veiled in the dusk as the voices chaunt the Miserere. If the day prefigured there ever break, will none rise from the tomb to ask why salvation came too late?

CHAPTER XXX.

I WENT to Pippo, and I said to him:

"You are an old friend, and a true one, will you lend me a sum of money?" and I assured him that for what I wanted, there were things enough still in the chamber to give him back his loan if that was what he feared.

But Pippo scratched his head mournfully.

"Dear one, do not ask it," said he. "Friendship is a sturdy plant, a sweet herb and a savoury, but when it touches the purse-strings—somehow it shrivels. I should be loth to love you less. So let us say nothing about money."

It was wise in him, no doubt, and he proceeded to show that

it was because of his very love for me that he spoke so, after cooking for me more than a score of years, and charging me at pleasure.

Ersilia, who had listened as she washed her clothes on the edge of the well in the yard, hung her linen to dry, then followed me out.

"I have money, take it," said she—"if it be to find *her*, or to do any good for her. And when you see her, tell her that I have promised Our Lady six candles as tall as I am if only She will bring her back; but, to be sure, the maiden never cared for these things, nor believed in them. Nay, take the money. I am not like Pippo. You will pay me again, and if not—not. I have cursed her many a time, but I would walk bare-foot to bring her back."

I saw the hot tears in her fierce black eyes, with the brown wrinkles round them; she was a stern and hasty soul, but her heart was true.

But I would not take a woman's money, and I went and unlocked the chamber of mine, that I never had entered since the day that I had sold Hermes in the barter, which had been to me as the bidding to bind his son to the altar must have been to Abraham of old.

And I took the other things that I had, the Etruscan armlet, and the bronze catacomb lamp, and the beautiful fire-blackened flower-crowned colossal head, and sold them to men who had the heart to chaffer and deal in such sacred things—I never had been able to do it,—and put the money that they gave me in a leathern bag, and set off on my way to the gilded city that Hilarion best loved.

For there I knew that quite easily, I or any one could hear of him, and know at once whither he had gone, and who was with him.

"Bring her back!" Alas! from the path she had taken there is no return.

Yet I went to search for her; having now these tidings of her inheritance.

I took the money, and made up my little pack as in the days of my wanderings, so that it strapped tightly on my back, and called to Palès to come with me, and left Rome once more. It was in the light shining weather of early autumn, when the air is once more elastic after the swooning heats of summer, and there is the scent of fresh wine everywhere upon the wind,

and oranges begin to fall at your feet as you walk, and the arbutus begins to redden its berries, and the maize has its embrowned plumes, tall as the saplings of maple.

It matters nothing how I fared; toiling on through the white dust along that road by the sea, with the blue waves underneath and the green palms above me.

I walked all the way; the sum of Ersilia's money was small, and I could not tell how I might need it. Often I paid my night's lodging and supper by an hour of stitching at broken shoeleather, and Palès if tired never complained.

I knew a dog once which, taken from its home in Paris to new owners in Milan, ran away from the unknown master, and found its way on foot all those many weary miles across the mountains, back to Paris, and died upon the doorstep of its old home; this is true; no fancy, but a fact; will you heed it, you who call the animals dumb beasts?

I only did what that poor lonely little dog found possible, hunted and baffled, and tormented with hunger and thirst, as no doubt it must have been, all along the cruel strange highways.

I walked along the sea-road first, and then across the great central plains of France, and it was fair autumn weather always, broken only by noble storms that swept the land majestically, and made the swollen rivers rise.

The air had the first crispness of winter when I entered the city of Paris.

I was weary in limb and brain, but I went straight to the house of Hilarion.

I had not seen it since the night that Lilas had died there. It was in a bye-street, being an old small palace in a noble but antiquated quarter; it had belonged to his mother's people in other centuries; it stood between court and garden, and was darkened by some stately trees of lime and chestnut. I found it not without difficulty; it was evening; I rang at the large bronze gate-bell, without thinking what I should do when it was answered.

An old servant came and replied to me through the bars of the gates. Hilarion was not there; he had gone away in the spring; no doubt he would return soon for the winter; they could not tell where he was; no, there was no one in the house except domestics. That was all he said, or would say, being trained to silence no doubt.

I turned away, and went into the busier streets, Palès cling-

ing close to me, for the blithe and busy gaiety, and the crowds, and the glitter, and the innumerable lamps, made these streets so strangely bewildering after the dusky moonlit ways of Rome, with their vast flights of stairs, and their great deserted courts, and their melody of murmuring waters, and their white gleam of colossal marbles or gigantic domes.

The city was all in the height of a fine frosty winter-night's merriment, and, what seemed to me after such long absence incredible, multitudes, all light-hearted and light-footed, were pouring down the streets, going to theatres or cafés or other places of diversion, with the lights all sparkling all amongst their trees, and the windows of their shops, and frontages of their buildings all gay with colour and ornament and invitation to amusement.

I felt my head whirl; I, who had sat so long by the moss grown fountain in the wall, where even Carnival had reeled away without touching me, and had left me quiet.

I sat down on a bench under a plane-tree, and tried to collect my thoughts.

Now that I had come, what could I do? how nearer was I? I seemed to myself to have come on a fool's errand.

Under the tree was one of those gay little painted metal houses they call kiosques, where they sell newspapers always, and sometimes volumes as well. In this little minaret-shaped toy, with its bright gas, and its ear-ringed black-haired girl to sit in it, I saw Hilarion's name in large letters; there was a new poem of his on sale there, just as Martial's used to be sold at "the shop of Secundus, the freedman of the noble Lucens, behind the Temple of Peace."

The volume was called "Fauriel."

I asked the woman if it were selling well; she laughed at me for an ignoramus; who was I that did not know that all Paris thought and spoke of nothing else?

I bought the slender, clear-typed book. I sat down under the trees and read it: Palès at my feet.

It was beautiful; he seldom wrote anything that was otherwise. He had the secret of a perfect melody, and the sense of unerring colour and form.

It had but a slight story: Fauriel loved and wearied of love; there was little else for a theme; but the passion of it was like a pomegranate blossom freshly burst open to the kiss of noon; the weariness of it was like the ashes of a house.

The union was intoxication to his own generation, which craves contrasts, as the sick palate craves to be burnt and cloyed.

I sat under the leafless branches and read the book by the light of the lamps above me. There were bands playing near some wheeling waltzing dreamy measure; the verse seemed to go with the music; the crowd went by, the many wheels made a sound like the sea; beyond at the end was the white pile of Napoleon's arch, and wintry masses of trees and countless lights:—if I look at a line of the poem now all the scene comes back to me.

As I read, the scorching passion, like a sandwind that burns and passes; the hollow love, that even in its first fresh vows was not sincere; the cruel autopsis of a dead desire, the weary contempt of human nature; the slow voluptuous and yet indifferent analysis of the woman's loveliness and of the amorous charm that could no more last than lasts the hectic flash of the sky at evening time—they all seemed to cut into my very flesh like stripes.

I seemed to hear her doom in them, the letters seemed stamped in fire.

I read it as a man reads a death warrant, seeing from beginning to end, as it were, in one flash of horrible comprehension. It told me no more than I knew, indeed; and yet it seemed to kill all hope in me. Because this book was freshly written, and it told me that the poet of it knew nothing of love save its brutality and its satiety: and how as a lover could he give any more than he knew?

It frenzied me. It seemed to me as if I saw her dead, and he showing all her unveiled beauties to the gaze of men, as Nero showed in death Agrippina. I tore the paper-cover off it, and the pages with their delicate printing, and bit them through and through with my teeth, and flung them on the ground and to the winds.

People passing by me must have thought me mad: the boys of the streets ran and caught the flying pages from the gutter to make them into any of the ten thousand uses that the ingenuity of poverty can teach them. Then I rose and tried to remember where I was, and to find my way to a cheap house of call where I had used to live with the comedians twenty odd years before.

That little hostelry had been pulled down to make way for

the blank, glaring, dreary, plastered piles which your modern architects love, and which have no more story in them, or light and shade, or meaning of any kind, than has an age-worn coquette's hard enamelled face.

The little wine-shop, once the abode of much harmless merriment and wise content, had been pulled down; but I found another that suited me, and stayed on in Paris, going every night and day to stare up at Hilarion's house, and ring at the closed gate, and receive the same answer, until the keeper of the gate grew angry, and threatened to hand me over to the keeping of gendarmes.

No doubt wiser folks and richer ones would have gone at once to the aid of the law to find her or hear of her, in many various ways, but I was afraid: we Trasteverini have no love of the law, or of its administrators, high and low, and I thought it best, rightly or wrongly, to keep close my own counsel.

Once passing a great public place, newly erected, and very handsome in the soulless sort of splendour which is the highest that your modern architecture ever reaches, I saw through the ranges of the columns in its halls the Nero and the Actea high-throned in a place of honour.

The young artists were speaking of it.

"How perfect it is!" said one. "He is a great man."

"Ay, truly," said the other; "and what a beautiful life his has been! beautiful as any Greek's in Ægina. If there be one whom I envy——"

I hurried out of the hall, sick at heart.

It had been a beautiful life indeed, and I had ruined it when I had bidden him take the face of his Actea from my Ariadnê.

So ill does the world judge: seeing but the golden-green burnished smooth side of the laurel leaf, and not knowing the bitterness and the poison in it for him who chews it.

Fame consoles, say the vulgar. Oh, fools! that which has the strength to achieve fame, has also the strength that does intensify the pang of every woe.

Going through the streets, with Palès clinging to my heels, not noticing any of the sights and sounds about me, but seeing before my eyes, as though they were written everywhere, upon the stones and in the sky, those beautiful vile mocking verses and treasures of language sent to show the hopeless vainness of all human loves, the music of a flute, divinely played, caught my dull ear and made me pause.

There is so much music in Paris always that I cannot tell why this should have had power to enter my brain and make me stop, but so it was; and Palès pricked her sandy fox-like ears, as though in that multitude of strangers seeing some familiar face. I went where the flute was being played, before a coffee-house door, beneath the roadside trees, under the bright still skies and the shine of the gaslights.

It was hard to see the player, for there were so many people crowding round and sitting at ease upon green iron chairs, sipping coffee and eating sweet things, for the night was serene and not cold. But I listened standing on the edge of the crowd, and though all flutes have but one voice amongst them, yet it seemed to me that this one spoke with the sweet sad sound that I had heard at Daïla, when the peaches had been ripe, and edging in a little nearer, I saw that the player was Amphion, whom I had never seen from the night that he had sent Maryx and myself to the seashore.

When I had returned to Rome after that time I had utterly forgotten him, and when remembering, I reproached myself and asked of him, I had been able to hear nothing; the fisherman by Quattro Capi could only say he had been an honest though not a useful lad whilst with him, and had gone away—out of the city, for aught that he knew.

And now I was sure that this was Amphion playing here—with the small olive face and the big black eyes, and the nervous girlish hands, and making such soft, sweet, wailing music, that even the Paris crowd was still and touched.

When the music ceased he took off the flat scarlet cap that he wore on his dark curls, and held it out to those who had listened; they were numerous, and all gave willingly. The flute he played on was a common one of ebony: not the silver flute of Daïla. He divided it and slipped it in his breast, as his way always had been; then came out of the crowd.

I stopped him: "Do you know me?" I said. "Where are you going? Why do you struggle like that?"

For he was trying to escape me.

He stood still, finding me resolute, but his face was downcast and his voice faltered, as he stammered some ill-connected words of where he lived and how it fared with him: then looking me suddenly in the face, the tears sprang into his eyes, he drew me aside hurriedly down into a passage-way.

"You are old and poor I can tell you," he said, quickly.

"I shall not be jealous of you. You care for her, but you cannot keep her. Come home with me, and I will tell you."

"She is in the city, then?" I said, with a great leap at my heart, and a dizziness before my sight.

"Yes, yes," he said, impatiently. "Come home with me."

I kept pace with his lithe and quick young steps to a house on the river.

"You will make me lose money," he said, restlessly, looking backward at the crowded and illuminated streets we left.

He had changed sorely from the pretty soft lad that he had been at Daïla; poverty and feverish passions, and the air and the ways of cities, had pinched and wasted his features, and given a false colour to his worn cheeks and a piteous eagerness to his glance. He drew me aside in a little passage-way, where there was a bench under a pear-tree, and a sign of a silver deer swinging, as I well remember, in the artificial light.

"Sit down," he said, imperiously, and yet timidly. "You will say I have done wrong, no doubt. But if the time were to come over again I would not do otherwise. I could not."

I shook with impatience.

"Who cares what you have done or left undone?" I cried cruelly. "Who cares? Tell me of her: has he left her?"

Amphion laughed aloud.

"Have you read 'Fauriel?'"

"I have had it read to me. I can understand the tongue now. Have you read it? Oh, it is beautiful, so the world says —it is beautiful, no doubt. Only reading it! why do you ask?"

A great heart sickness came over me: I held him with both my hands on his arm.

"For the love of God tell me in a few words, since you know everything, it would seem—is she near me now? Is she living? Has he forsaken her quite?"

Amphion was silent, thinking.

"Come with me," he said, and turned towards the quarter where the grey Seine was gliding in the moonlight through Old Paris, the Paris of Philippe d'Orléans and of the Reine Isabeau.

Something in the boy's look and the sound of the voice froze my blood in my veins and nailed my tongue to my throat.

I thought to see her lying dead, or perhaps to see some nameless wooden cross above the ditches where the friendless and forlorn lie buried.

I could not ask him another word. Palès crept after us wearily with her head hung down.

I had forgotten that for ten hours I had never eaten nor drank.

He took me to a house standing quite on the water, with the towers and walls of the more ancient quarter close about it, and a few trees and the masts of boats rising above their boughs. He climbed a steep dark stairway, smelling of all foul odours, and paused up on high before a closed door.

"Go in there," he said, and opened the door. My heart stood still. I had no clear thought of anything that I should see, only one idea—that she must be within the chamber lying dead.

I set my foot upon the threshold with the ghastliest fear my life had ever known.

The room was almost in darkness, for one small lamp would not light it; it was a garret, but clean and spacious, with one casement, through whose leaded panes the stars were shining, and the zinc roofs were glistening under the rays of the moon.

There was the form of a woman there: her face I could not see. She was leaning her forehead against the window. She did not turn or move at the unclosing of the door. Palès ran forward whining; then I knew who it was; I went to her timidly, and yet in joy, seeing that she lived, even though she lived in misery.

"My dear, will you not speak to me?" I said, and tried to touch her hand. "Will you not even look? I am your friend always, though poor, and of so little use"—and then I stopped, and a greater horror than the fear of death consumed me, for as she turned her face towards me there was no light of any kind in it, no light of the reason or the soul; it had the mild, dumb, patient pain of a sick animal upon it, and in the great eyes, so lustrous and wide opened, there was no comprehension, no answer, no recognition.

The eyes looked at me; that was all; they did not see me.

"Will he be long?" she said: her voice sounded faint, and far away.

"Do you not know me, oh, my dear? Do you not even know me?" I cried in my mortal agony. She did not seem even to hear; she sighed a little wearily, and turned to the casement and leaned her forehead there. I burst into tears.

I shall always see that bare white room and the plank floor, and the high garret window, with the stars shining through it, as long as I see anything on earth. Sometimes in the night I

wake up shivering, and thinking I am there; with her lustrous, hopeless eyes looking at me so, with no sight in them and no reason.

"Oh, my dear! Oh, my dear! Where is God that He lets such things be?" I cried in my suffering, and raved and blasphemed, and knew not what I said, but seemed to feel my very heart-strings being rent asunder.

But she heard nothing, or at least, she took no notice; she was looking through the narrow panes, as if her lover were to come back to her from heaven.

The boy, standing on the threshold, drew me back to him.

"She is always like that," he said, very low. "It is a pity he cannot see: it would serve him for fine verses."

"Hush, for the mercy of heaven. Can you jest?"

"I?—Jest?"

Then I felt ashamed that I had hurt him with such a word, for I saw in his face what he felt.

"Forgive me, child," I said humbly to him, as I felt: "I, too, am mad, I think. Mad!—who dares say any such word—who dares?—the clearest, purest, loftiest mind that ever loved the sunlight of God's truth! Oh, she will know me in a little while. Let me go back and speak to her again. She has not seen me well, the place is dark."

And again I touched her and spoke, and again her eyes rested on me, not seeming even to see that I was a human thing. "Will he be long?" she muttered once more, being disturbed.

"She asks only that," muttered Amphion. "She says nothing else. You only pain her—you only make her more restless. Come away—now you have seen her."

The boy spoke with the authority of an old greyheaded man, and his boyish face had the look of age. He drew me out across the threshold, and across the narrow passage-way, into another garret, much smaller, and quite as bare.

"You want to hear," he said, with a heavy sigh, pressing his hands to his forehead. "You will be angry: you will say I have done wrong. But I hated to let you know or any one. I was all the friend she had, and though she never knew me, yet that was a kind of joy. Well, this is how it was——"

He breathed quickly, then drew a long sigh, and so began to speak.

"You stayed in Rome; that strong man, too, who makes the carven images: I could not stay. I had plenty of money; his

money; you remember. I came here. Here, I thought to myself, he would be sure to come: never is he long away from Palès, for he says that here only do men know how to live, if in Rome only can they learn to die. So I stayed here and I watched his house.

"I know how to watch; I was friends with the snakes at home. The windows of house were always shut; it was like the face of a blind man, it told nothing. One day, that is a year ago now, they opened. I lived in a little room high up, very near; so high, so near, I could see down into his garden, and I learned their tongue, only I let them believe I did not know it, because so I heard more. He lived his old life; quite his old life; it was all pleasure—what he calls pleasure—and she stayed in her own chambers with her marbles. What did she know? Nothing. She was shut up as you shut a bird; once or twice he had her with him at the opera; she was as white as the statues that she worships; she had a quantity of old Greek gold upon her. I knew that it was Greek, for I had seen him buy it in Athens. Some one near me said it was Helen—risen. But she is not Helen, nothing is less like her; she read me of Helen in those old songs of war, in Rome. I think she suffered very much, because all those people looked so at her: as for him he only smiled. This that I tell you of now belongs to last winter. Have patience: I must tell it my own way.

"There came then to this city the wicked witch from Rome; she whom you called a duchess; she sent for him, he went, and when he had gone once, then he went often. She, in those rooms with her marbles, was more than ever alone. Her window opened on to the gardens, and from my garret window I could see. Sometimes she would come out under the trees; they grow very thickly, and it is damp there, but she would sit still under them hour after hour—and he all the while about in the pleasure places, or with the Roman woman. I do not think he was cruel to her: no, I think not; he only left her: that is not cruelty, they say.

"When the spring came, and all those lilacs were in flower, and the air, even in this place, was sweet, she was all the day long in the garden, I could see her shadow always on the grass; the grass hardly ever had his shadow, too. Sometimes I followed him, and I saw how he spent his nights; if I had been strong, like your sculptor, I would have killed him, but I am only a boy, —why did not the sculptor come? The Roman woman went

away, and he went also; I learned from his people that he had left no word where he had gone.

"She used to walk to and fro in the moonlight under the trees, till one was sick to see her. All day long she did nothing, nothing, only sit and listen, I suppose, for his steps, or the sound of some one bringing some word from him. She got a look on her face like the look that your dog's eyes have when it loses you in a crowd. You know what I mean. Men came and tried to see her: men who were his friends, that is their friendship;—but never would she see any one. She was so foolish, I heard the servants say; but I think they were sorry for her, and I knew they loved her. All this time I kept myself by means of my flute, and watched the house all the time I was not playing. It was a hot summer: heat is so heavy here, where all these zinc roofs burn your eyes; it is not like the heat on our shores, where we lie in the air all night, and hear the cool sound of the waves.

"The summer was horrible here; it was all clouds of dust by day, and glare of gas by night, and the noise of the streets roaring like an angry beast. She never left the garden. She was never quiet; she was always moving up and down, and doing nothing; she who used to do so much in every second of the day in Rome. I heard the people of the house say, 'She thinks he is coming back;' and the older ones sighed and seemed pitiful, but the man at the gate, who is wicked, laughed with his friends. They tried to enter and see her; great princes some of them were; but never would she see any one.

"One day, when she was walking in the garden, I saw a messenger take her a great casket; she said not one word, but she threw it on the ground, and the lid of it burst open, and pearls and other jewels rolled out, and she trampled on them and trod them into the earth;—I never had seen her like that. The man who had brought them was frightened, and gathered them up and hurried away. The man at the gate laughed, and told him she was a fool.

"That is how the summer went by; and from my garret I could always see her, and all the long moonlit nights she would pace up and down there under those trees:—and the lilacs grew shrivelled and black. Then all at once I missed her. Days went by; at last I asked; the man at the gate laughed again. 'She is gone,' said he. 'She is a lovely creature, but not human I think; he wrote to her, but she did not understand:

she is gone away, somewhere or other, you see she did not understand—as if it were not always so.' What is always so?"

The Greek lad sighed, and drew his breath wearily; then again took up the thread of his bald narrative, which he told in simple, unlearned fashion.

"Of course I searched for her everywhere, but it was long before I found her. The man at the gate seemed uneasy, for fear of the displeasure of Hilarion; but he said, 'We have no orders; we can do nothing; when he comes back——' So they did not stir, nor care: as for me, I thought she was dead. But still I sought high and low.

"One day, in this very street, I heard some women talking; this woman whom you have seen with her was one of them; they spoke of a stranger who was dying of hunger, yet who had spent the only coin she could earn by making the nets for the fishermen of the Seine, in buying grey clay and earth. Then I thought of her, for often she would mend the old men's nets by the Tiber, having learned to do it by the sea; and who but she would have bought sculptors' clay instead of bread?

"Then I questioned the French woman of her, and little by little she told me. She has a good soul, and a tender one, and she was sorrowful, though knowing nothing. 'This girl is beautiful,' she said, 'and belongs to noble people, I think, but she has had some great grief, or else is mad. She passed down my street one day at daybreak and asked for a little empty room that I had to let, and told me that she had not a coin in the world, and bade me get her the fishing-nets to make or mend. I do not know why she spoke to me; children and dogs like me, —perhaps that was why. And she seemed to be in such great woe, that I had not the heart to turn her away; and I gave her the room, and got her the work, and piteous it is to see her lovely slender hands amongst all that rough cordage and hemp, and torn by them, and yet working on and on; and with the first money she gained she bought clay, and she began to model a statue, like the figures one sees in the churches; and all day she makes or mends the nets, and half the night, or more, labours at this clay; and she is mad, I think, for she never speaks, and scarcely a mouthful passes her lips, save a draught of water.'

"And when the woman told me this, then I felt sure that it was she. And I told a lie as of having lost my sister, and begged to see her, and after a while the woman, who was anxious,

and even frightened, let me go up to the room on the roof. And this is how I found her.

"The room was bare, and there was a heap of nets on the floor, and there was a statue in clay, which had his features and his form, only it was winged and seemed like a god. She was clad in the rough white garments she wore in Rome, and her arms were bare, and she was modelling the clay still with her hands, and she never heard me enter nor the woman speak, who said to me, trembling, 'Look—is it a false god that she will not even leave it to break bread?' And I said to her, 'Ay; it is a false god.' For indeed, it was in his very likeness; only greater than he, more beautiful, more perfect, as, no doubt, he always seemed to her: may he live for ever in pain, and die without a friend!

"The woman, trembling, went and touched her, and said, 'Come away, it is night, you must be hungry.' She turned and looked at us both. 'Hush! it will be finished very soon; when it is done he will come back.' Then she turned again to the statue, and worked on at it, and her hands seemed so feverish that I thought they must have burnt the clay as they touched it. 'Is she your sister?' asked the woman; and I lied and answered 'Yes;' and together we stood and watched her. 'Whilst she still made the nets, she seemed to have some reason left, though she never spoke,' said the woman, 'but since she has touched that earth she seems mad. Is it indeed your sister? What sorrow is on her that she is thus?' But I could not speak. I watched her till I felt suffocated. I knew not what I did. I was beside myself. God forgive me!

"I had my knife in my vest—the knife that should have ended his life in those nights of his pleasure, if I had not been a coward—such a coward! And now, like the foolish wretch I was, I so loathed the sight of that image, and of her lovely life wasting and burning away on it, that as I saw it I sprang upon it, and plunged my knife into the very breast of it, and the moist clay reeled and crumbled, and fell away, and all its beauty sank down into a mere heap of earth—God forgive me!

"And she herself fell down at the sight of the ruined thing, as though my knife had stricken her life; fell with a great cry, as if her very heart were bursting; and her forehead struck the stones, and the blood came from her mouth."

His voice sank into silence with a sob. For me, I sat quietly by his side, with the Seine water flowing underneath the wall down below, and the lamps looming yellow through the mist.

I wanted to know nothing more. I saw all the cruel months and years, as in a mirror one sees one's own eyes looking back at one.

"Go on," I said to the lad; and after a little he took up his tale.

"She was like a dead creature many days and weeks," he said. "We called help; they gave it some learned name; some fire of the spine and brain, they called it. She rose from her bed, for she is strong, they say, but her mind seems gone ever since then. 'Will he be long?' she is always asking; that is all; you have heard her?"

"Yes; I have heard her."

I spoke calmly, but it seemed to me as if the lamps burning through the fog were lights of hell, and I heard all its fiends laughing.

"How has she lived all this while?"

This had passed in September, the boy said, and we were now in March, and passing into early days of spring, and all the while that treasure and ill-got wealth, hoarded in Fiumara, had been waiting her, whilst she was lying between life and death in this river attic in the heart of a foreign city!

He hung his head, ashamed.

"I should have sent to you; yes, I knew, I thought of that, but I could not: it was horrible, yet it was a kind of happiness to be the only thing between her and the workhouse—the hospital—the grave. For without me she would have gone there. 'She is my sister,' I said to the woman, and they believed me, and let me do for her. My money was almost gone, but I had the flute, and I could always get money in plenty, playing here and there. They would have hired me for the great theatres, but I was afraid of that. I have played at the singing places in the open air—nowhere else—for I was always afraid he might return and see me, and so know. Indeed, she has wanted for nothing, for nothing that we could give. She is as well here as if she were in a palace; she knows nothing of where she is. Of the statue she does not seem to have any remembrance; the people shovelled it away—it was only a heap of grey earth. You are angered; you think I did wrong—yes—but for the moment, almost, I thought the clay image was alive, and I fancied I should set her free of its spell. Indeed, indeed, she wants for nothing. She is docile; she lets the woman do what she likes; but all day long she watches the window, and all she

says is that, 'Will he be long?' The woman says she sleeps but very little; when she awakes she says always the same thing. And all Paris raves and weeps over 'Fauriel!'"

The boy laughed bitterly, the tears coursing down his cheeks.

"I suppose he never sends to know where she is, else his people would seek for her,—it is so easy to know anything in this city. I think they have never tried to know. She has never gone out of that room since that day," he continued. "She has all she can want, oh, yes! indeed; she does not know whether it is a garret or a palace; only sometimes, I think, she feels the want of air, without knowing what it is she feels.

"You will say I should have sent to you. Yes, I thought of it; but you see, I cannot write, and then I have been glad to be the only one near her—the only thing she had. Of course she does not know. She sees me very often, but she never knows me. There is always that blank look in her eyes. I suppose it is her brain that is gone.

"Oh! you are angry; do not be angry. Perhaps I did ill. But had I let you know you would have come, and that man who lives on the Golden Hill, and is rich; and she would never have wanted me any more.

"I make plenty of money; yes, indeed. If I went to the concerts I should be rich, too, they say, and I have been so happy to work for her, and to buy flowers and pretty things—though she never seems to see them—and then, I think always, some day that cloud that seems over her will break and go away, and then perhaps I shall dare to say to her, 'I have been of some little use; just look at me kindly once.' And you see, if I had let you know, all that would have been over, as it is over now. Of course you will take her away?"

"Be still, for the pity of Heaven!" I cried to him. "Be still, or I shall too be mad."

For the simple tale, as the lad told it, was to me as full of woe and terror as the sublimest tragedy that ever poet writ. Listening, I seemed to see and to hear all that had been suffered by her; every one of his poor words was big with grief, big as the world itself for me. Oh, why had I broken the steel!

Men repent of evil, they say; it is ten thousand times more bitter to repent of having held back from evil. Sorely, and in passion and agony, I repented then having held my hand in Venice.

The boy was nothing to me. I had no mercy for him or remembrance.

It was quite late at night. I sat dumb and stupid in his garret on the edge of his truckle-bed; the muffled sound of all the life of Paris came up dully, like the distant sound of the sea when one is miles inland.

"Will you take her away?" he said, with a piteous entreaty in his voice.

"Let me think," I said to him; and the stars and the roofs seemed to whirl, and all the pulses of the bestial world to beat in mine.

For it is bestial: a beast that for ever devours and has never enough.

Yes, of course I would take her away; I would take her to Rome.

Rome is the mighty mother of nations; in Rome she might find peace once more.

I had heard in other days that sometimes when the mind is shaken from its seat, and reason clouded by any great shock, nothing is so likely to restore it and awaken consciousness as the sight of a familiar place and a beloved scene, linked by memory with perished happiness.

Yes, I would take her away.

Here I did not dare to ask for any counsel or any surgeon's aid; I had a dread of the inquisition of strangers and of the many delays of long inquiry, and the same feverish eagerness that Amphion had had to keep close to himself her sorrow and her needs, did now consume me likewise.

If I could only get her back once more, I said to myself, back to the chamber on the river.

And with that odd remembrance of trifles which comes to me sometimes across great woe, I thought what a pity it was that Hermes was gone, and that there were now no red and golden bean-flowers to run across the casement!

"Yes, I will take her away," I said.

The poor lad said nothing; his head dropped on his chest. He had done all he could, and for six months had gone to and fro, and out in all weathers, playing to get the means wherewith to find her shelter and care, denying himself, and thinking only of her; but to me then he was no more than any one of the leafless lime-boughs drooping by the gates of Hilarion.

Shivering I went across the passage-way and opened the door

of her chamber. The woman that he paid for such service was sitting there, sewing at linen, a woman old and gentle; she herself was sitting, too, with her arms leaning on the bare table, and one hand dreamily moving into figures some loose white rose-leaves fallen from a rose-tree in a pot. She did not hear me or heed me. When I touched her she lifted her heavy eyes, in which a light like that of flame seemed to burn painfully.

"Will he be long?" she said, and moved the rose-leaves to and fro feverishly.

The woman shook her head.

"That is all she ever says," she muttered as she stitched. "She says it in her sleep—such time as she does sleep—and she wakes stretching out her arms. Who is he? He must be a beast."

"He is a poet!" I said, and went out from the chamber into the lighted ways of the city and their noise. My brain seemed reeling, and my eyes were blind.

In the gay and shining avenues, all alight and full of moving crowds, women were talking with wet soft eyes of "Fauriel."

CHAPTER XXXI.

NEXT day I got such changes in my papers as were needful for the journey, and I took her on her homeward way. She did not resist. She was not in any way sensible of where she went, and she was docile, like a gentle animal stunned with many blows. Her bodily health did not seem weak, though she was very feverish, and her pulses stopped at times in a strange way.

The woman who had been with her wept at parting from her.

"Will she find him there?" she asked.

"Nay, never there, nor anywhere," I said; for who finds love afresh that once has been forsaken?

She had had the clue and the sword, and she had given them up to him, and he in return had given her shipwreck and death. It was so three thousand years ago, and it is so to-day, and will be so to-morrow.

From my little stock of money I paid that woman well, for

she had been true and tender; the rest I spent in going back to Rome. The boy came with me. I was hard and cruel to him at that time, but I could not say him nay.

Throughout the journey she did not change in any way; the noise, and movement, and many changes, seemed to perplex and trouble her vaguely, as they trouble a poor lamb sent on tha iron road, but no more. She never spoke, except now and thei when she would look wistfully out at some gleam of sky o water or spreading plain, and ask, "Will he be long?" Neithe of me nor of Amphion had she the slightest consciousness. It was the madness of one all-absorbent and absorbed idea; indeed, what else is Love?

Even the beautiful snow-ranges and the serene glory of the mountains, from which I had hoped something, failed to alter her or rouse her. I think she did not know them from the clouds, or see them even. No doubt all she ever saw in daylight or in darkness was one face alone.

It seemed to me as if that journey would never end; to me it was like a horrible, distorted dream, a nightmare in which an appalling horror leaned for ever on my heart; all the splendours of early spring, of virgin snows, of clear blue ice, of falling avalanche and glacier spread upon the mountain side, and underneath in the deep valleys the lovely light of the fresh green, and of the purples and azures mantling the rocks where the gentians blossomed—all these, I say, only served to heighten the ghostliness of that long passage through the slow short days back to my country.

For despair went with me.

But tardy and terrible though it was, it drew on towards its end before many suns had risen and set.

It is so beautiful, that highway to our Rome across the land from Etrurian Arezzo; the Umbrian soil is rich and fresh, masses of oak clothe the hills, avenues of oak and beech and clumps of forest-trees shelter the cattle and break the lines of olive and of vine; behind are the mountains, dusky against the light, with floating vapours veiling them, and half hiding some ruined fortress or walled village, or some pile, half palace and half prison, set high upon their ridges; and ever and again, upon some spur of them or eminence, there is some old grey city, mighty in the past and still in fame immortal; Cortona, with its citadel like a towering rock, enthroned aloft; Assisi, sacred and grey upon the high hill-top; Spoleto, lovely in her ancientness

as any dream, with calm deep woods around, and at her back the purple cloud-swept heights that bear its name; Perugia Augusta, with domes and towers, cupolas and castles, endless as a forest of stone; Foligno, grand and gaunt, and still and desolate, as all these cities are, their strength spent, their fortresses useless, their errand done, their genius of war and art quenched with their beacon fires; one by one they succeed one another in the long panorama of the Appenine range; wood and water, and corn and orchard, all beneath them and around them, fruitful and in peace, and in their midst, lone Trasimene, soundless and windless, with the silvery birds at rest upon its silvery waters, and here and there maybe a solitary sail, catching the light and shining like a silver shield amidst the reedy shallows.

Then, after Trasimene come the wild bold gorges of the Sabine mountains; wooded scarps, bold headlands, great breadths of stunted brushwood, with brooks that tumble through it; rocks that glow in the sun with the deep colours of all the marbles that earth makes; deep ravines, in which the new-born Tiber runs at will; and above these the broad blue sky, and late in the day the burning gold of a stormy sunset shining out of pearly mists that wreath the lower hills; then the wide level green plains, misty and full of shadows in the twilight, white villages hung aloft on mountain edges like the nests of eagles; then a pause in the green fields, where once the buried vestals were left alone in the bowels of the earth, with the single loaf and the pitcher of water, to face the endless night of eternity; then "Roma," says some voice as quietly as though the mother of mankind were only a wayside hamlet where the mules should stop and drink.

Ay, there is no highway like it, wander the world as we will, and none that keeps such memories.

But for me, I saw no loveliness then of city or of citadel, hoary with years; of monastery, sheltered amidst snows and forest; of silent lake sleeping in the serenest folds of the hills. I only strained my ear with the eager hearkening of any spent and hunted animal to hear the name of Rome.

At last I heard it, when the night had fallen, though the moon was not as yet up over the edge of the eastern horizon.

The great bells were booming heavily; some cardinal had died.

Gently, and without haste, I led her by the hand through the old familiar ways, shrouded in shadows under the cold starless skies.

My heart almost ceased to beat. Here was my last hope. If this had no spell to rouse her, she would sleep in the dreams of madness for ever; none would ever awaken her. She had loved the stones and the soil of Rome with a filial devotion; Rome alone would perchance have power to save her.

I walked on and led her by the hand. Her fingers moved a little in my hold as we passed through the Forum, and past the basilica of Constantine, as though some thrill ran through her. But I looked in her face, and there was no change, it was still as stone, and the eyes were burning, and had a sightless look.

I went onward by way of the Capitol, past the Ara Cœli and the colossal figures of the Dioscuri. Once she paused, and a sort of tremor shook her, and for an instant I hoped for some passing remembrance, ever so slight, that yet should come to link her once more with the living world.

But none came; her eyes never altered; she went with me obediently, passively, as she would have gone with any stranger who had led her so, past the great stairs, and the divine Brethren, who once had been to her not any whit less sacred than had been Rome itself.

We went down into the grim grey ruinous streets, that pass under the Tarpeian Rock, with the lichen and the wild shrubs growing on mounds of brick that once were temples, and the poor crowding together in dusky hovels that once were the arched passages of palaces or the open courts of public pleasure places.

There was little light; here and there a lantern swung upon a cord, or the glow from a smith's forge shone ruddy on the stones. She did not notice anything; she came onward with me, walking straightly, as the blind do. Thence from the darkness and the squalor and the ruin, we came out by winding ways on to the river's bank by Quattro Capi.

The river was full, but not in flood; its tawny hues were brown with the soil of the mountains; on it a few boats were rocking, tied with ropes to the piles of the bridge; the island was indistinct, and the farther shore was dim, but at that instant the moon rose, and lines of silver passed across the pulsing stream, and touched to light the peristyle of the little moss-grown temple by our side, and the falling water of the Medici fountain.

She moved forward of her own will, and walked to the edge of the Tiber, and stood and looked on the strong swift current

and the shadowy shores, and on the domes and roofs and towers and temples that were gathered like a phantom city on the edges of the shores.

She looked in silence.

Then all at once the blindness passed from her eyes, she saw; and knew the sight she saw. She stretched out her arms, with a tremulous hesitation and gesture of ineffable welcome.

"This is Rome!" she cried, with a great sigh, while her very soul seemed to go forth to the city as a child to its mother: then she fell on her knees and wept aloud.

I knew that she was saved, and Rome had saved her.

CHAPTER XXXII.

We stood there, two creatures, quite alone on the edge of the river. There must have been people near, but there were none in sight; the boats rocked on the little waves; the heavy masses of the trees were black; breadths of silvery light rippled under the arches; from the convent of the Franciscans on the island, there came distant sounds of chanting; the full moon hung above the pines of Pamfili. She remained kneeling: her head bowed down between her hands. Great sobs shook all her frame.

It was so still; there might have been only in the city, the ghostly world of all its dead multitudes, it was so still. At last I grew frightened, seeing her thus upon the stones, so motionless. I touched and raised her; she rose slowly to her feet.

"Have I been mad?" she said to me.

Hardly could I keep from weeping, I myself.

"Nay, my dear, not that," I said to her. "Nay, never that; you have been ill. But now——"

She shivered from head to foot. With returning reason no doubt she remembered all things that had passed. She was silent, standing and looking on the Etruscan river she had

loved so well, as it flowed to the sea beneath the moon. Her eyes had lost their strained look of unconscious pain, and the burning light had gone out of them; they were wet and dim, and had an unspeakable misery in them, like that in a young animal's, when it is dying, and knows that it dies.

"What month is it?" she asked.

I told her.

"It was summer when he wrote," she said, and then was still again, gazing at the water.

I began to fear that too soon I had rejoiced, and that the clouds would gather over her again, and that she again would lose herself in that strange awful night of the brain, which we, for want of knowing what it is, call madness.

But watching her features, as the rays of the moon fell on them, I saw gradually returning there the look of silence, of resolution, of endurance, which was natural to them, and which had been on it on that first day of her sorrow, when she had dreamed of Virgilian Rome, and found the Ghetto.

She turned her face to me, and though her voice was broken and faint, it was firm.

"Ask me nothing. I cannot speak," she said to me. "But you are good. Hide me in some corner of Rome, and find me work. I must live, I must live, since he lives——"

The last words she spoke so low that I scarcely heard them; she was speaking to herself then, not to me. I took her hand.

"Rest in the old place to-night. To-morrow we will see."

She went with me obediently; speaking no more. There was no one in the entrance or upon the stairs; I had sent the boy there onward, to beg of Ersilia that it might be so; all was quiet and deserted; the one lamp burned before the Madonna in the wall.

Strong shivers shook her, but she did not resist. She passed up the staircase with me to my room, where no longer was there Hermes to greet her: Hermes, who made woman, but not such a woman as she was.

They had swept it clean, and it was spacious, but it looked desolate to me; she however seemed to see no change; as far as she saw anything she only saw the broad and open window, through which there shone the river and the sky.

I drew her to the hearth where logs were burning. There, suddenly she stopped and looked, then with a cry threw herself forward on the rude warm bricks before the hearth, and kissed

them again and again and again, as women kiss the flushed cheek of their sleeping child.

"Oh, stones, you bore his feet, and felt the rose leaves fall, and heard him say he loved me! Oh, dear stones, speak and tell me it was true."

So murmuring to them she kissed the rough warm bricks again and yet again, and laid her tired head on them and caressed them; they were not colder than his heart, I thought.

"Oh, stones, it was no dream? Tell me it was no dream? You heard him first!" she muttered, lying there, and then she crouched and wept and shuddered, and laid her soft mouth and beating breast to those senseless flags, because once they had borne his feet and once had heard his voice. Would he have laughed had he been there? Perhaps.

I drew back into the gloom and let her be. She had no thought of me or any living thing, save of him by whom she had been forsaken: no thought at all.

She was mad still, if Love be madness:—and not the sublimest self-oblivion which can ever raise the mortal to deity, as I think.

I let her be; she had fallen forward with her arms flung outward, and her head resting on the stones. Strong shudders shook her at intervals in the convulsion of her weeping; but she was otherwise still. The warmth from the burning wood fell on her, and touched to gold the loose thick coils of her hair. I closed the door, and went out and sat down on the stair outside, and waited in the dark.

Other women one might have striven to console with tidings of the peace that lies in riches; but her I dared not. When a great heart is breaking because all life and all eternity are ruined, who can talk of the coarse foolish sweetness that lies for fools and rogues in gold? I could not at the least. Perhaps, because stitching there where the streets meet, and the fountain falls in the open air by the river, gold has always seemed so little to me: so great, indeed, as a tempter, but as a comforter—how poor.

I sat still in the dark, and I did not know how the hours went; the lamp was burning below in the wall of the twisting staircase, and there was the hum of the distant voices on the bridge, and the sound of the water washing itself away under the bridge arches, and now and then the beat of oars. I had done the best that I could, but it weighed on me as though I had done some crime.

Perhaps she would reproach me for having brought her back to consciousness, as the suicide, snatched by some passing hand from death, has blamed his saviour. She had only awakened to agony, like the patient under the knife when the anæsthetic has too soon ceased its spell. I only made her suffer more a thousandfold by lifting up that cloud upon her brain. Yet I had done for the best, and I had praised heaven for its mercies when she had looked with eyes of consciousness upon the moonlit Tiber, and had cried aloud the name of Rome!

I had done for the best: so had I done when I had gone up to the Golden Hill, and told the story of my dream to Maryx.

As my memories went back to him, thinking dully there in the dark, not daring to enter the chamber again, for there was no sound, and I thought perhaps she slept in the gloom and the warmth of the heat, a footfall that was familiar came upon the stairs, a shadow was between me and the dull lamp swinging down below, the voice of Maryx came through the silence and the darkness to my ear.

"Are you there?" he said to me, "are you there?"

"Yes, I am here. Hush! speak low!" I answered him; and I rose up, afraid, for I had had no idea that he could have returned to Rome, which was stupid in me, doubtless, because several months had gone by since I had set forth to walk across France, and from home I had had no tidings, since none of my friends could either read or write.

A vague fear fell upon me, I hardly know why, seeing his dark and noble head bending down upon mine in the gloom.

"Hush! speak low!" I said to him, and I rose up from the stair and stared up at him. "You are come back?"

"Yes, I have come back. I heard that he was with another woman, there in Cairo; is that true?"

"No doubt it is true; I cannot tell where he may be, but *she* is here—alone."

His great dark eyes seemed to have flame in them, like a lion's by night, as they looked down into mine in the dusk of the stairway. He gripped my shoulder with a hard hand.

"Tell me all," he said. And I told him.

Once he moaned aloud, like a strong beast in torture, as he heard: that was all.

He heard me without breaking his silence to the end. Then he leaned against the wall of the stairs and covered his face with his hands, and I saw the large tears fall through his clasped fingers, and drop one by one.

No doubt the man who sees what he cherishes dead by disease in her youth suffers much less than he did then. For to Maryx she was not only lost as utterly as by death, but she had perished in her soul as in her body; she was destroyed more absolutely than if he had beheld the worms of the grave devour her. The lover who yields what he loves to Death, tries to believe he does but surrender her to God; but he——

"Oh, my love, my love!" he said once: that was all.

Very soon he had mastered his weakness and stood erect, and the veins were like knotted ends on his bold broad forehead.

"We are free—now," he said: and I was silent. For I knew what he meant.

But what would vengeance serve her? It seemed to me, a Roman, to whom vengeance was wild justice and sacred duty, for the first time, a poor and futile thing. It could change nothing: undo nothing; restore nothing. What use was it? If one killed him what would he care?—he was brave, and he believed in no hereafter.

Maryx put out his arm and grasped the old bronze handle of the door.

"Let me see her," he said.

I clasped his hand in hesitation: I was afraid for him and for her.

"I was her master," he said bitterly; "I will see her. She shall know that she is not friendless;—nor without an avenger. Let me see her. What do you fear? Have I not learned patience all these years?"

And he turned the handle of the door and entered. I stayed on the threshold in the gloom.

She was lying still upon the hearth as I had left her; her arms were folded, and her head was bent on them; the tumbled masses of her hair hid her face; the flame from the hearth shed a dull red light about the dark and motionless figure.

At the unclosing of the door she started and rose to her feet, and stood as a wounded deer stands at gaze.

Her face was white, and the eyes were dilated, and the misery of all her look was very great; but it had the calmness of reason and much of her old resolve and strength.

When she saw Maryx she knew him, and a deep flush mounted over all the pallor of her face, looking as if it scorched her as it rose.

He was a strong man and had learned patience, as he said, the

bitter uncomplaining patience of a hopeless heart, he had thought to be calm. But at the sight of her the iron bonds of his strength were wrenched apart; he shook from head to foot; all the manhood in him melted into a passionate pity, in which all other more selfish passions were for the moment drowned and dead. He crossed the floor of the chamber with a cry, and fell on his knees at her feet.

"Take me," he muttered, "take me for the only thing I can be—your avenger! Oh, my love, my love!—your lover never, your master even never more, but your friend for ever, and your avenger. Vengeance is all that is left to us, but as God lives I will give you that."

And he kissed the dust on which she stood, as he swore.

She looked down on him, startled and moved, and with the blood coming and going in her face, and her eyes resting on him, bewildered, and in the old dulness of half-conscious wonder.

Then as he vowed his vow an electric thrill seemed to run through her, she put out her hands and thrust them against the air, as though thrusting him away.

"My friend! And you would hurt him!"

She muttered the words faintly: she was like a creature not fairly awake after a ghastly dream.

Maryx rose slowly to his feet: all the passion of his pity and his pardon frozen in his breast.

"Your avenger—and I will take his life for yours," he answered slowly, as he stood erect before her, and his face, burned darker by the desert sun, had a terrible look upon it.

All the yearning and anguish of months and years had gone out, as in one tempest-driven flood, in the oath with which he had knelt down on the stones before her as before a thing made, by wrong and by dishonour, only tenfold more sacred and beloved: and all this was frozen in him and turned back upon himself, and lay upon his soul like ice.

She listened, and she understood.

With one splendid gesture she threw her hair out of her eyes, and stood erect, once more a living thing of soul and fire.

"I forbid you!" she cried, as she faced him; and her voice lost its weakness, and rang clear and loud as a bell strikes. "I forbid you! There is nothing to avenge."

"Nothing? What! You forgive?

"There is nothing to forgive."

"What! Are you woman, and born of woman? Are you not forsaken like the vilest thing that lives?"

The burning colour stained her face red once more.

"There is nothing to forgive; he *has* loved me!"

Maryx laughed aloud.

Men who have truth, and honour, and fidelity spent their lives like water year after year, unloved and uncared for, going to their graves unmourned. And such passion as this was given to falsehood and to faithlessness!

She took a step towards him; her face was crimson, her mouth was firm, her hair tossed back showed her eyes gleaming, but resolute, under her lovely, low, broad brows—the brows of the Ariadnê.

"Listen!" she said swiftly. "I have been mad, I think, but now I am sane. I remember; you were always good—good and great—and I seemed thankless, though I was not so in my heart. You used to be my master, and you were full of patience and pity, and I remember and I am grateful. Yes. But—listen! Unless you promise me never to touch a hair of his head, never to go near to him save in gentleness, I will kill you before you can reach him. Yes; I am calm, and I say the thing I mean. Life is over for me, but I will find strength to save him: the gods hear me, and they know."

Then she was silent, and her mouth shut close, as though it were the mouth of a mask in marble. Her words were not empty breath, she would have done the thing she said.

There was perfect silence in the chamber. Then Maryx laughed as men laugh in the dreams of fever, or when they die of thirst on a battle-field.

"And they say that God made woman!" he cried aloud.

Her eyes were steady and resolute under the straight classic Ariadnê brows. She was gathering her memories up slowly, one by one, and the courage and endurance natural to her were awoke.

"There is nothing to avenge," she said again. "Nothing, nothing; if *I* choose to forgive. What are you to me? You have no right. If my father lived and would hurt him, I would say to him what I say to you. He has loved me: can anything alter that? I tired him—he left me—that must be my fault. When the sun passes, does the earth curse the sun?"

Her voice shook, and lost its momentary strength; but she conquered her weakness—since such weakness would be blame to him.

"You are my friend—yet speak of hurting him! Do you

not know? While he lives I will live. I could not die and leave him on the earth, in the light, smiling on others! You will not hurt him? Promise me!"

Maryx made no reply.

"You do not promise?"

"No."

"Then go. I can see you no more until you do."

She turned her face from him, and with a gesture signed to him to leave her.

He stood there, not seeming to see the sign, nor to see that she had turned away from him.

"Must one be worthless to be loved like that!" he muttered; and his head fell on his chest, and he looked like an old man grey with age, and he turned and came out from the chamber, moving feebly, and like one blind.

I went from the threshold to her side.

"Oh, my dear, are you grown cruel? That man is noble, and full of pity and pain, and in the old time he served you with so much tenderness."

She crouched down by the side of the hearth and sighed heavily.

"I cannot help it—let me be."

Then suddenly she looked up at me with wide-open despairing eyes.

"He was weary of me. It was my fault: not his. I did not know—I did not know. His love was my glory—how could I tell? When I went to that cruel city then I learned,—I was only a mere frail foolish thing in his sight, as the others were—only that; but how could I tell?"

And then once more her head sank down, and she wept bitterly.

"Yet you think those who love you have no right to avenge you?" I cried to her.

She stretched her arms out to the vacant air.

"There is no vengeance that would not beggar me more. Whilst he lives, I will find strength to live. What vengeance do I want? He *has* loved me—the gods are good!"

Then she swooned, and lost consciousness, and lay there, by the low fire of the hearth, like some fair pluckt flower cast down upon the stones.

What could one do? Any vengeance would only beggar her the more.

I sat awake all the long cold night.

CHAPTER XXXIII.

QUITE in the east of Rome, nigh the Porta Tiburtina, on the way that goes to Tivoli, there is an old brick tower, whose age no man knows, and whose walls are all scarred and burned with war.

The winding streets are set about it in a strange network, and at its base there is a great stone basin, where the women wash their linen and the pretty pigeons bathe. From its casements, barred with iron, you looked downward into one of the green gardens, shadowed with leaning pines and massive ilex, that are the especial glory of our city; and outward you saw over all the majestic width of Rome, away to the far distance where the trees of Monte Mario arise, and the Spada Villa sits on the hillside, like an old man who crouches and counts over the crimes of his youth, to the lovely long lines of light where the sea lies, and where at sunset all the little white and rosy clouds seem to go flocking westward like a flight of birds.

In the middle ages, and maybe even earlier, when Stilicho counselled the making of the adjacent gate, the tower had been a fortress and a fighting-place; later on it had been a dwelling-place, chiefly sought by artists for the sunlit wonder of its view, and its solitude in the centre of the city, and the many legends that had gathered about it, as the owls lived on its roof. It had spacious chambers, painted and vaulted, and some were so high that no single sort of noise from the streets below could reach there, and nothing could be heard save the sound of the birds' wings and the rush of the wind on stormy days amongst the clouds.

To this place after a while she came and lived. When I told her at last of the curious treasure she had inherited, it scarcely seemed to make any impression on her; her first instinct was to refuse it; then, when I reasoned with her, she would only take a small part.

"Keep me enough to live on," she said, "and give the rest to the poor."

From the great goodness of my priestly friend, we had no

trouble or interference of any kind, only it was difficult to make her understand or comply with the few formalities that were needful for her entrance into the inheritance of the dead miser.

Amongst other things which had belonged to him, and been secreted by him, were many jewels; diamonds, large as the eggs of little birds; and rubies and sapphires uncut. She looked at them, and pushed them away with disgust.

"Let them be sold," she said; "there are always the poor——"

And, indeed, there are always the poor: the vast throngs born century after century, only to know the pangs of life and of death, and nothing more. Methinks that human life is, after all, but like a human body, with a fair and smiling face, but all the limbs ulcered and cramped and racked with pain. No surgery of statecraft has ever known how to keep the fair head erect, yet give the trunk and the limbs health.

As time went on she grew thankful to have the needs of life thus supplied to her without effort, for she would have found it difficult to maintain herself; and her old pride, though it had bent to one, changed in nothing to others, and she would have starved sooner than have taken a crust she had not earned. But always she refused to spend more of the stores of the Ghetto than was necessary for her personal and daily wants; and she gave away such large sums and so much treasure, that she left herself barely enough for those wants, simple though they were.

"The money was wrung from the poor, that I am sure. It shall go back to them," she said; and if I had not been able to cheat her innocently, and so restrain her hand, she would have been once more amongst those who wake in the morning not knowing whence their daily bread could come.

Rome began to speak of her story, but no one saw her.

"Find me some place where no one will know that I am living," she said to me. So I found her the old brick tower, with its pines and its old orange-trees behind it, and the owls and the pigeons about its roof, where the wind-sown plants had made a living wreath of green.

I made it as beautiful as I could without letting it show that money had been spent there, for of riches she had a strange horror; and when she saw anything that seemed to her to have cost gold, she said always, "Take it away, and sell it for the poor." For she had something in her, as in the old days we had

used to say, of the serenity of the early saints, mingled with all the Pagan force and Pagan graces of her mind and character And, so far as she thought of them at all, she abhorred the riches of Ben Sulim, because she was sure that oppression and dishonesty and avarice, and all the unpunished sins of the usurer and of the miser, had piled that hoard together.

It were hard to tell the change that had come over her. All the absorption into Art which had once isolated her from the world of others, had now become equally absorbed into the memory of her love, and a more absolute isolation still. After that night beside the hearth-fire, she never named him. Only once, when, in my loathing of his heartlessness, I let escape me words too furious against him, she stopped me as though I uttered blasphemy.

The great fidelity of hers never waned or wavered. He had forsaken her: she could not see that this could make any change in her own fealty. She lived because he lived, and for no other reason.

Her life indeed was a living death.

When one is young still, and has by nature pure health and strength, actual death does not come as easily as poets picture it. But because the body ails little, and the limbs move without effort, and the pulses beat with regularity, none the less does a living death fall on the senses and the soul; and the days and the years are a long blank waste that no effort can recall or distinguish, and all the sweet glad sights and sounds of the earth are mere pain, as they are to the dying.

And there was no consolation possible for her—for her by whom Rome had been found a ruin, and Love had been found a destroyer. To her all gods were dead: she had no faith on which to lean.

The Farnesiani women who live immured in the walls by the Viminal Hill, murmuring their ceaseless adoration of the Sacrament, where never daylight comes, or voices of friends are heard, or human faces seen, are less desolate, are more blessed than she, for in their living sepulchre they have dreams of an eternal life that shall compensate for all.

But to her this self-deception was not possible. For her the Mother of Angels had no sigh or smile.

Yet there was in her a great tenderness, which had been lacking before; suffering and love had brought to her that sympathy which before had been wanting. She had been pure

and truthful, and never unkind; but she had been hard as the marble on which she wrought. Now no kind of pain was alien to her; the woe of others was sacred to her; when she spoke to the hungry and the naked there were tears in her voice; when she saw a little child at its mother's breast, an infinite yearning came into her eyes.

So the days and the weeks and the months went on, and she dwelt here in this high tower, undisturbed, and thinking only of one creature. I am sure she had no hope that he would return to her. He had left her alone in her desolation, as Ariadnê was left on Naxos. Only, to her no consolation was possible.

I do not think either that she ever understood the deep wrong that he had done to her. In some way she had wearied him, and he had forsaken her: that she understood. But she cherished the memories of his love as her one chief glory upon earth. She would have said, as Héloïse says in one of her letters:—

"Plus je m'humilias pour toi plus j'espérais gagner dans ton cœur. Si le maître du monde, si l'empereur lui-même, eut voulu m'honorer du nom de son épouse, j'aurais mieux aimé être appelée ta maîtresse que sa femme et son impératrice."

The world calls this sin. Aye, the world is very wise, no doubt.

It chooses its words well—the world which lets the adulteress pass up the throne-rooms of courts, and live in the sunshine of prosperity, and bear her jewels on her forehead of brass, and wear the robe of her husband's shame as though it were a garment of righteousness; but on the woman who has loved greatly, and only loved too well, and has dared be faithful, and knew no solace for love's loss, pours down its burning oil of contumely, whilst it thrusts her to a living tomb, as Rome its vestals.

No doubt the world is wise—and just.

But she knew nothing of the world. The little she had seen of it in that white gilded city which had made her misery, had filled her with horror. She had felt any look of homage from other eyes than his an infidelity to him. She would have been glad to be unlovely in others' sight to be more utterly his own.

As for me I never asked her anything.

I could imagine without any words the terrible ease with

which he had made her believe a great passion pure as religion and divine as martyrdom, and then wearying himself of the very purity and grace of the thing he had invoked, had dropped the veil, and let her see herself and him as others saw them. He had been like the magicians of old, who by their spells called up all shapes so beautiful and unearthly, that the magician flung down his crystal and fled appalled from the thing that he had summoned.

I never asked her anything. I served her in all ways I could, as I had done ever since that time when she had come to me in the midday sun with the poppies and the passiflora flowers in her hands, and I had awakened from my sleep and said to her, "Dear, Love is cruel; that he always is."

I was glad and thankful that she knew me well enough never to offer me any of the gold of the dead man: that would have stung me so indeed that I think I could never more have looked upon her face. But she knew me too well; and I did such service for her as I could, making fit for her the old, dusky, lofty rooms, and finding an honest woman to dwell there, for Ersilia could not leave her own dwelling-house, and going on with my own labours at the corner of the bridge, so as to be no burden to any one.

The poor little Greek boy haunted the place, and begged so piteously to see her once that I could not deny him. But it hurt her so much that I was fain to hurry him away. She knew nothing of his service to her, and only remembered at the sight of him all the days that were gone:—he was sorely wounded, but he loved her well, and submitted.

"It is hard!" he said once.

"It is hard," said I; "all great love is. That is how we tell the true from the false. You would not purchase the right of seeing her at the cost of telling her the debts she owes to you?"

"Ah, no—never, never," said the poor little lad, who, though timid and false in some ways, in his love of her was courageous and very true; and he would come at evening time under the walls of the tower and play on his flute, in hopes that the sounds might float up to her and soothe her; and the women at the fountain would stop in beating their linen, and the dogs would cease barking and come round, and the people at the doorways would pause in their quarrelling and swearing, and the very pigeons seemed to be pleased as they circled round and round before their good night's sleep—but I doubt if ever she heard

She never seemed to me either to listen to, or to see, anything that was in the air or around her in the streets—unless it were some misery that she could relieve in any way, or some little child laughing and catching at its mother's hair.

I think the world only held for her one face, and the air only one voice: and wherever she went she saw and heard those.

And though I had promised what Maryx had refused to promise, there were times that I felt that whoever killed Hilarion would do well.

He never came to Rome.

But I think she always hoped with every sun which rose that he might come there, for she would cover herself so that no one could have told whether she were lovely or unlovely, young or old, and would walk to and fro the city hour after hour, day after day, week after week, looking in every face she met; and Rome was only dear to her now because its stones had borne his steps and its waters mirrored his image.

All powers, or thought, of Art, seemed to have perished in her, and this pained me most of all. It seemed as if when that clay figure had crumbled down into a heap of grey earth in Paris, all the genius in her had passed away with it.

I hoped always that the sight of the marbles would awake it in her once more, as the sight of tawny Tiber rolling beneath the moon had brought back her reason. But she passed by the noble things that she had worshipped as though they were not there, and looked in the face of the Dioscuri, and knew them not, for any sign she gave. I would have spoken to Maryx and asked his counsel, but I dared not do it. His own fate seemed to me so terrible, and his woe so sacred, that I dared not enter his presence.

He stayed on in Rome: that was all I knew.

Once or twice I went and saw his mother, to whom I dared not speak of Giojà, for she had a peasant's narrowness of judgment, and a mother's bitterness of exclusive love. She grew blind, and had ceased to be able to see the colours of the flowers in the atrium, and the sun shining on the roof of the pope's palace, which had made her feel she was living in the city of God. But she could still see the face of her son, and could read what it told her, though she saw it through the mist of failing sight.

"It is as I said," she repeated for the hundreth time. "It is as I said. The marble has fallen on him and crushed him; it

fell on his father's breast, it has fallen on his heart: that is all. He thought he had mastered it: but you see——"

For the marble was to her a real and devilish thing; bearing blows in subjection many a year, to rise and crush its hewer at the last.

"If he had only made the image of the true God!"—she said, and told her beads. She had in her the firm belief and the intense hatred which made the monks and nuns of the early monastic ages rend out the eyes and bruise the bosom of the pagan deities, and obliterate with axe and knife the laughing groups of Hours and of nymphs.

"Does he work?" I asked Giulio.

"Since he came back—never," the old man answered me, and I was afraid to ask to see him, and went out of the light lovely house where the roses were pushing between the columns, and the nightingales sang all the long spring nights.

For it was spring now once more.

"You are cruel to Maryx, my dear," I said, timidly to her that evening, for I felt timid with her, being ever afraid to touch some wound.

"He would hurt him," she said, under her breath, and her face flushed and grew white again.

I knew that it would be useless to urge her. I think that it was, without her knowing it, her sense of the love of Maryx which made her heart harden itself like stone to him; for to a woman who loves greatly even the mere utterance of any passion from any other than the one she loves seems a sort of insult, and to hearken to it would be an infidelity.

"Why did she let the god come to her; she could have died first," she had said, long before, of Ariadnê; and she herself would have died, that being her reading of faithfulness. And truly there is no other.

Spring had come, I say, and nowhere is spring more beautiful than here in Rome.

The glad water sparkles and ripples everywhere; above the broad porphyry basins butterflies of every colour flutter, and swallows fly; lovers and children swing balls of flowers, made as only our Romans know how to make them; the wide lawns under the deep-shadowed avenues are full of blossoms: the air is full of fragrance; the palms rise against a cloudless sky; the nights are lustrous; in the cool of the great galleries the statues seem to smile; so spring had been to me always; but now the

season was without joy, and the scent of the flowers on the wind hurt me as it smote my nostrils.

For a great darkness seemed always between me and the sun, and I wondered that the birds could sing, and the children run amongst the blossoms—the world being so vile.

The spring brought no change to her; no change could ever come; there was the pity of it. She lived on merely because he lived; she had said the truth: she could not set the yawning gulf of the grave between herself and him; she could not sink into eternal silence whilst his voice was still upon some other's ear, his kiss upon some other's mouth. For all else, life was terrible to her; and the fever of it began to consume her, and she grew weak and suffered much, though she never complained; always indifferent to physical pain, she was now as it seemed insensible to it, and her genius seemed dead.

She had bought everything that ever he had written, and she had learned the tongue that they were written in, and night and day she hung over them, and their pages grew blistered and illegible in many places with the scorching tears that fell on them.

Once I found her thus: her eyes gazed at me wearily, and with sad bewilderment.

"I try to see in them what he wished for, and where I failed," she said, with a piteous humility in her words.

I cursed the books, and him by whom they were written. I could have said to her the truth; I could have said, "You had no fault save this; that with you he heard but the nightingales, and so pined for the jibbering apes!"

But I forbore; I was afraid lest she should turn to hate me, knowing that I hated him.

Weaker natures than hers would have sought sympathy, and would have suffered shame: she did neither. She was too absolutely pure in the perfectness of her love to be conscious of that shame which is the reflection of the world's reproaches; there was no "world" for her; and she had been too used to dwell alone amidst her dreams and her labours to seek for the pity or the pardon of others, or to regret its absence. She had fallen in her own sight, not because he had loved her, but because he had left her; because she had in some way that she did not understand become of no value, and no honour, and no worth in his sight.

She did not rebel against his sentence, but she loathed herself

because she had incurred it. All the lofty, pure, and poetic passion which she had dreamed of in her ignorance over the pages of Dante and Petrarca and Sospitra she had given to him: that she had been nothing, in truth, higher or better than a toy to him was incomprehensible to this nature which had the purity and the force of Electra and Antigone. In some way she had failed: that was all she knew.

With her he had heard only the nightingales. And in some strange, horrible way, the snakes and the apes had been stronger than she, and to him had been sweeter, and so had drawn him back to them and had left her alone.

That was all she knew.

With an intense pride she had an intense humility. "He loved me once," she said; and this seemed to her to be a wonder still so great that it excused in him all later cruelty; and like the woman she once had pitied on the Maremma shore, she would not have wished her wounds less deep, nor their pain less, nor their hideousness less, because those wounds assured her—he had loved her once.

Alas! even this poor and bitter consolation was a self-deception. Even when he had laid his roses on her knees and wooed her first, he had not loved her, not even with such love as that foul patrician jade wrung from him by treading on his worn heart, as a vine gatherer on the bruised and pressed-out grapes crushed in the vats at autumn.

For so he soon told me, even he, himself, with that cynical frankness which at times broke up from under the soft disguises of his usual words.

He had never come to Rome; never once since that chill and bitter Lenten night when Maryx and I had found the chamber empty, and Hermes in the moonlight alone.

I, asking always people whom I knew, learned that he had never been in Rome since then, nor ever once at Daïla. It was not fear certainly which kept him from the city; but probably it was that sort of restless but fruitless and vague remorse which is the repentance of such a man as he.

For the difference between good and bad in men lies less, I think, in what they do than in how they feel, and so less in act than conscience; and many a one amongst us could undo the evil he has done if only he would not push away the pain it causes him, and hurry on leaving the past behind him like a dead mule on the high road to rot forgotten.

We all sin, but some of us walk on, not looking back, and some of us do look back, and thus do go again over the ill-trodden path, and so, perchance, meet angels on the way—to mend it.

Hilarion never looked back: not because he was altogether cruel, but because he had tenderness sufficient twined in with his cruelty to make him reluctant to see pain, although quite reckless as to causing it. The masters of the world would slay ten thousand victims here in Rome, yet weep sometimes if a beloved slave died: and why?—because they were only Humanity let loose to all its instincts.

I dreaded lest he should come to Rome, for I knew that even such comparative calm as she had attained would be destroyed again, if she could behold his face or hear his footstep on the stones.

I watched for him ceaselessly and in anxiety, but he never came, and I heard that he was in Paris and in other places that he loved, and the vile Sovrana woman was also absent, and the pale sad peace that reigned with us, as it reigns over a buried village when the snow has covered it, and the fires are out, and the cries stilled, and the sleepers all sleeping for ever, was untroubled by any burst of storm or break of dawn.

It was night with us always: night always: even in the golden glory of wide Rome, with the light upon the amethystine hills, and blue aerial distances, and the sound of birds' wings and children's laughter, and the people's gladness, everywhere about the bright broad waters.

CHAPTER XXXIV.

One evening, when a late Easter was quite over, I was carrying home some work that I had done, and I went perforce past the palace of the Sovrana princes; the palace of his black-browed wanton, who there ruled like Olympia Pamfili, and had the great world all about her; for she who makes her husband's shame, nowadays can clothe herself with it as with a garment of righteousness; be her lord only but vile also.

In the shadow of the mighty courtyard of the place, there was a vast crowd of gay grand people coming and going; amongst them I at length saw Hilarion; he was entering the house. My heart leapt with a wild bound, as though the blood of only twenty years pulsed in it.

But for my promise to her he would have died with the moment that the moonlight fell on his fair, serene, cold features, and revealed them to me.

I left my errand undone, and waited by the palace gates. It was in the oldest part of Rome—a mighty place built out of travertine, from great ruins, in the middle ages by some pope; just now its courts were alight with lamps and torches, and up the vast stairs one could see the serving men, all red and gold, like strutting paroquets standing one above another; no doubt this kind of life must be fine to lead, and I dare say people in the midst of it very soon forget—unless they wish very much to remember.

I stood outside the gates with sundry other folks, who had come there to stare at the foreign princes and great ladies who alighted and passed up between the men in red and gold.

No one noticed me; a good many hours went by; the people by the gates had long before grown tired of looking on, and had gone away; I was left alone, but I did not stir; there were a fret and fume of the waiting horses all around, and their breath was like steam on the night. After a time the people within began to come forth again, amongst the earliest of them he came; in your great world lovers are careful I believe to preserve this sort of affectation, it saves the honour of the ladies and their lords.

I stopped him as he went out to his equipage.

"Let me have a word with you," said I.

He turned, and I think he grew paler; but he was brave always, and for me, I must say, he had always been gentle in his conduct, and never had made me feel in any way that I was only a cobbler at a street corner, stitching for daily bread.

"Is it you, old friend?" he said with a kindly indifference—real or assumed. "Do you want me? It is late. Will not to-morrow do as well?"

"To-morrow will not do," said I. "Come out with me."

And he came, being always brave, as I say, and no doubt seeing some look on my face that told him I was longing for his life.

The palace stood, as I say, in one of the oldest parts of Rome; a turn or two of a passage-way, and one was in front of the dome of Agrippa, the gloomiest, grandest thing that the world holds, I think, above all when the moonlight is upon it, as it was on it now.

I walked thence, and he with me; his attendants remained at a sign from him before the palace.

When there was no one to hear in the deserted place, I stopped; he also.

He spoke before I could speak.

"If you were a younger man, you would kill me—would you not?"

His blue eyes were serene, and met mine, but his face was troubled.

"If I had not promised never to harm you, I would find the means to kill you now, old though I may be."

He looked at me thoughtfully.

"Whom have you promised?"

"You must know. There cannot be two who, so wronged, would yet forgive."

He sighed a little restlessly.

"Is she well?" he said, after a pause, and there was a sort of shame in his voice, and his eyelids fell.

I cursed him.

Heaven be merciful to me a sinner. I called down on his head every blight and vengeance of heaven, all ill and wretchedness and despair that life can ever heap on those whom God and man forsake. I cursed him in his lying down and his uprising, in his manhood and his age; I cursed all offspring that might be begotten by him, and all women that his love might light on; I cursed him as in the Scriptures holy men curse the children of hell.

I was wrong, and such curses should blister the lips that utter them, being all weak and at each other's mercy, and all adrift in an inexplicable mystery of existence, as we are. But I was beside myself; I thought only of her; I saw only in him the cruel brutality of Love, which in his passion-flower hides an asp, and with his kiss upon the lips gives death.

He stood tranquil and unmoved under the fury of my words, and he showed no resentment; he shuddered a little once, that was all. He did not seek to go away. He stood quite quietly by the granite steps of the Pantheon, with the columns behind

him that have withstood the fires and the sieges of two thousand years.

When my voice had died, choked in my throat by the force of my own misery and hate, he looked at me, with his clear cold eyes dim.

"I am sorry that you should hate me," he said, under his breath, "but you are right—as you see things. And why do you call on any god? Rome has outlived them all."

The patience in him, and the serenity, quelled the tempests of my fury and my loathing, as answering, passion would have fed them. I stood stock-still, and stared on him, in the moonlight.

"Can one never hurt you!" I muttered to him. "Are you brute, or devil, or what, that you feel nothing, and only stand and smile—like that?"

"Did I smile?" said Hilarion. "Nay—you hurt me when you hate me. It is natural that you should, and just enough; only, when you call on God——! Has ever He listened?"

"No! since He never kept her from you—No!"

"Who shall keep the woman from the man?" said he, with a sort of scorn. "Nature will not; and it is Nature alone that is strong."

"I blame not your love; I am no puritan; what I curse in you is your bitter coldness of soul, your deception, your faithlessness, your cruelty, your abandonment; how could you leave her, once having loved her—how?"

"I never loved her," he said, wearily. "What said Anakreon in your dream? Instead of Eros it is Philotès. It is a bitter truth."

I groaned aloud.

The clay that she had spent her force on in her delirium in Paris, was more real, more worthy worship, than this phantom of passion, which had led her on to perish!

"I am ashamed—I regret!" he muttered hurriedly, with a true contrition for the moment in his voice. "Why did you ask me to leave her alone? And then one saw that Maryx loved her: that was a temptation the more. Do I seem base to you? Men always do whenever they speak the truth. Yet it was not only basensss—no. Such purity with such passion as hers I never knew. She never understood I did her wrong; she only loved me. She was so calm, too, so like the old statues and the old fancies of the immortals, with eyes that never seemed likely

to weep or smile or look anywhere except straight to their home in heaven. I never had seen a woman like that—— "

"Therefore you were not content until you had made her like to others!"

"She never became so—never," he said quickly. "I may have ruined her as you and the world call ruin; but as I live, here, I swear I left her soul unsullied. Coarse words would have cancered one's tongue, spoken to her! One night I took her to the opera in Paris—only one. It seemed like dragging Athene through a bagnio; a mere man's look at her seemed insult."

"You could feel that! And yet—— "

"Ay, and yet I forsook her, you would say. Because of that; can you not understand? She was a constant shame to me! If you had poured out poison to a creature trusting you, and she kissed you as she drank it, and thought each throe it caused her sweet because the hurt was from you, could you bear that? It was so with us. She stung me always, not meaning; and then I tired——

"You cannot think it of me that I would desert a woman brutally, and a woman so young," he said after a pause, with an impatience and apology in his tone, for it hurt him, that such as I, or any one indeed, could deem him guilty of such kind of grossness in his cruelty.

"I was faithless; I left her—yes; but I meant to return. I thought she would more easily understand that one might weary—of course I never dreamed that she would flee away to misery like that—— "

"No, I remember!" I answered him, bitterly. "You said of old, when you buried a dead love you cast some rich gifts on its grave, as the Romans the porca præsentanea. Well, you see there are dead things you cannot bury so, and there are things that will not die at all, not even at your bidding. You are a famous poet, but it seems to me that you are but a shallow student of great natures."

"She will love me always you mean—yes."

"You dare to triumph?"

"No, I meant no triumph. There are women like that,—they make one dread lest ever there should be the endless Hereafter that we wise men laugh at. How should we bear their eyes?"

A shiver shook him as he walked to and fro in the moonlight.

"Tell me more of her," he said, pausing before me.

"I will tell you nothing."

"You think me so unworthy?"

"I think any one of the galley slaves that toil in the gangs, with their crimes written on their breasts, better and honester than you—yes."

He was silent; the moonlight poured down between us white and wide; there lay a little dead bird on the stones, I remember, a redbreast, stiff and cold. The people traffic in such things here, in the square of Agrippa; it had fallen, doubtless, off some market stall.

Poor little robin! All the innocent sweet woodland singing-life of it was over, over in agony, and not a soul in all the wide earth was the better for its pain, not even the huckster who had missed making his copper coin by it. Woe is me; the sorrow of the world is great.

I pointed to it where it lay, poor little soft huddled heap of bright feathers; there is no sadder sight than a dead bird, for what lovelier life can there be than a bird's life, free in the sun and the rain, in the blossom and foliage?

"Make the little cold throat sing at sunrise," I said to him. "When you can do that, then think to undo what you have done."

She will forget——"

"You know she never will forget. There is your crime."

"She will have her art——"

"Will the dead bird sing?"

He was silent.

"Tell me," he said abruptly, after a little while, "tell me, is she here in Rome?"

I would not answer him; I stared on him stupidly, seeing his pale fair face in all its beauty against the granite columns of Agrippa's temple.

"Is she in Rome?" he asked.

"I will not tell you."

"Then she is! When I learned in Paris that you had found her, I knew that she was safe. You thought I drove her away. You do me wrong. I left her indeed—but I would have returned. I wrote to her to try and make her see that one might weary, still not be a brute; how could I tell that she would take it so? My servants should have sought her—they might have known that I had no intention to drive her from me; not like

that. When I reached Paris, then I sought for her, but then you had been there, and had gone; I recognised that it was you by what they said,—you had found her in wretchedness?"

"She kept herself by making fishermen's nets—yes."

I would not tell him all the truth; I could not bear that he should know that her lovely and lofty mind had lost itself in the fell gloom of madness for his sake.

He moved impatiently with a gesture of shrinking and regret.

Hilarion could inflict all tortures of the emotions on a woman, and forsake her, and feel no pang; but physical need in any woman hurt him, and the thought that it was suffered for him, or through him, stung him sharply; in his code his honour was hurt if the creature he had caressed could want for bread. She might die of pain, or drag out a living death in solitude; but that was nothing. That did not touch his honour, not in any way.

"Does she want—now?" he said, with a tinge of ashamed agitation in his cheek. "Does she want? Surely she must. And I——"

"She wants for nothing," I answered him; "and my patience I cannot answer for: not if you insult her—*so*. Words are no use; I came to say to you, 'Go out of Rome.' Do not outrage her with the sight of you beside that patrician jade in the palace yonder; break with that Jezebel, and go to what other vile woman you will,—only not *here*."

Hilarion laughed a little drearily.

"Jezebel, as you call her, has the wit to sting me, and burn me, whenever she touches me; so she keeps me. Men are made so. Jezebel makes me a beast in my own sight, and a fool in the sight of men; still she keeps me. Why? I do not know very well. What is the sorcery of shameless women? Who can tell? But a sorcery it is. History tells you that."

"Will you leave your adulteress? That is all I care to know."

"If *she* be here," he said softly; yet for this jade he had forsaken her!

"Tell me of her," he said again.

"Do you regret her?"

"Yes,—and no. I seem brutal to you, no doubt. But I could not live beside her; Jezebel suits me far better."

"What fault had she?"

"The worst; she loved me too well. Do you not see? It was a perpetual reproach."

He was silent; his face was troubled and ashamed, and he moved impatiently away.

"Can you not understand? To be thought faithful, faultless, half divine; and all the time one knows—oh! say it is thanklessness and worthlessness in one, no doubt it is; but men are made so. There are women that all the time one works one's will on them, make one ashamed."

"And so one does worse?"

He threw his head back with a gesture of irritation.

"And leaves them? Is that worse? One cannot live in air too rarified; we are but brutes, as nature made us. That is not our fault. Not that I meant to leave her long, only she took it so. She could not understand."

No, she could not understand.

It seemed to me that never word more pitiful had been spoken. She could not understand that Love was mortal.

He had walked to the edge of the fountain; the moon shone on the water, and the water reflected the pale and troubled beauty of his face.

"We are faithful only to the faithless, you once said," he muttered, turning back from the water that mirrored him. "That is true. Who is it says that we are happiest with light and venal women because we are not ashamed to be with them the mere beasts that nature made us? Montaigne, I think. It is true. And besides that, with her, every little lie I told her—such lies as one must always tell to women—seemed to sting me as I said it. She never doubted me! If she had doubted me once, it would have been easy; but she always believed—always. In Venice she made her marble in my likeness, but made me a god. That was her fault always. She never saw me as the thing I am!"

He sighed; a sigh selfish and restless.

"Would you have the truth, the whole truth?" he said, as with an effort. "Well, then—I never loved her; I tell you I never loved her—No! She was so lovely, and had so much genius, and she was so unlike all others, and she was so utterly at peace, so given over to her art and dreams, so still, so far away—I wanted to destroy it all. Oh, not from any vileness—men are not vile; they are only children; when children see a flower they must root it up; a frost-crystal, they must snatch

and break it; I was a child and cruel: children are cruel. Passion is brutal, too; but it is strong and constant. I had not passion. I said to myself she shall care for me and not her art; but I never should have said it if she had not looked so far away from earth and all its follies. I never loved her; no! One must be hurt to love; she never hurt me."

Oh, terrible words and terrible truth; he had hurt her as he would, and she alone of the two had been faithful.

He ascended the steps of the temple, and walked to and fro wearily, for his conscience stirred and smote him.

"Was it vanity?" he muttered. "Perhaps it was vanity! It was not love. Something of love—its amorous charm, of course—came into it; for she was so lovely in body and mind, and she worshipped me as never other creature ever did, I think; but for the rest——I never should have touched her if you had not cautioned me, and if she had not had those deep, serene, abstracted eyes of hers, that seemed to be always seeing heaven and to pass by men. One longed to call up one's own image in them, as in calm waters, and trouble them for ever!—do you not know? You call that base?—Well you are right, maybe. It was so. I cared but little for her, but I wished to be the first. Perhaps I was a coward, and treacherous, as you say: I did not think of that. She loved her art, her gods, her dreams; I said to myself she should love me. I never had met a woman with a pure soul; hers was quite pure; I wrote my name across it out of sport, and you see the name burns there in fire always;—well it may."

He had not even loved her! He who had taught her that imperishable love which possesses the body and the soul, and fills all earth and heaven, and lets no living thing reign beside it for a moment, nor any thought obtain a place!

"You never loved her?" I muttered. "You never loved her? You who wrote your name, as you say, across her very soul, so that it burns there always, and will burn on, and on, and on, so that God Himself could not quench the flame of it, even if He would. You never loved her!—you!"

It seemed to me the pitifulest thing that ever the ear of man could hear; it stunned me.

Across my brain ran a line I once had read in some coarse cruel book:—

"Les femmes ne savent pas distinguer l'appétit de l'amour."

Was great Love nowhere in the world save here and there in

some woman's breaking heart?—Was Philotès the only thing men knew?

I could speak no more to him; the unutterable desolation of it struck me dumb. I felt as in that very spot some pagan Roman might have felt, seeing his daughter passing by between the guards to perish for the love of Christ, he knowing all the while that her Christ was dead in Galilee, and could not aid her, and that the angelic hosts she waited for to break the wheel and quench the fires, had never had a shape or substance, save in the heated fancy of some desert saint or hunted preacher.

He laughed a little, partly in cruelty and far more in sadness, and looked me full in the face.

"If you were a young man you would kill me."

I looked him also full in the face.

"If I had not promised her never to kill you, I would find the means to do it now—old as I am."

"You would do quite right," he said dreamily, "and, perhaps, you would do me a service: who can tell? We know so little."

Alas no:—he said truly; we know so little, and it cripples our hand; the worst vengeance we can think of is a swift, sure blow that deals out death, and then, perhaps, all the while we only summon man's best friend.

I stood before him baffled, impotent, paralysed.

The merciless frankness of him froze the very current of my blood, and I saw that he spoke the truth. He had not even loved her once.

He had better loved this black-browed illustrious jade here in Rome, who struck him in her furies, and dragged him in the dust in her soft moments.

"Will you tell me where she is?" he said abruptly once more.

"No, I will not.

"Are you afraid that I should make her return to me?"

"No: your vanity has nothing more to gain."

"I should have gone back to her."

"You think so. But you would not."

"Why?"

"Because you know that though she may never look upon your face again, none the less is she yours for ever. Since men are faithful only to the faithless, what is true to them they can easily forsake."

He was silent.

There was a mist like tears in his eyes.

"She loved me too much, I tell you: no man should ever be loved much," he said, impatiently. "It wearies us, and it makes us too sure. Women will not understand——"

"Base women understand that well; and, understanding, keep you and such as you. Go to them."

Then I turned, and would have gone away. But he overtook me.

"I respect you, because you would kill me. Cannot we part in peace? Is there nothing that I could do?"

"No. There is nothing. When men do what you have done, God himself could do nothing. You must know that. As for peace there can be none between us. Farewell: when you lie dying, maybe you will wish that Love were beside you, and you will call on it, and call in vain."

Then without other words I left him.

CHAPTER XXXV

I LEFT him and went away by myself from the Pantheon homeward to the chamber by the bridge where Hermes and all other treasures of my past were missing.

I knew that he would go out of Rome; I knew that he would not seek her; because, although his heart in a manner smote him, thinking of her so near, and knowing himself so beloved, yet the desire of ease and the dislike of pain were stronger emotions with him than any other. She was so utterly his own: though lands and seas had stretched between them, and half a world had parted them, none the less, he knew well enough—too well,—would she be faithful; never, though she were left alone till her youth should flee away and grey age come, never would any other gain from her a moment's thought or a passing glance: he knew.

Why should he return to her?—his passion had nothing to conquer, his vanity nothing to gain. And what did he know of

love?—this poet with words that burned as they sang, this lover with eyes that caressed as they looked, till the souls of women dropped in his path like jessamine flowers when the wind passes.

"I had never left Dorothea had she refused me her trust," says the lover who is faithless, in a play of Calderon's.

Never was line written that embodied sadder truth; and Dorothea forgives outrage on outrage, crime on crime, and even when he has bidden assassins slay her, would still kiss his hand and pray for him to the Christ on her cross; but *he* never forgives:—though against him she has no fault, save the one fault of having had faith in him.

"If you love me you will listen to me!" prays the man to the woman; and she listens: "You should have turned your ear from me!" says the man when it is too late.

Not because he is vile; no. Hilarion said justly; very few men are that; but because he is like a child, and his plaything was beautiful whilst yet it was a refused secret, a treasure withheld, a toy untried, but being once attained and owned, the plaything lies forgotten in a corner, whilst the player runs forth in the sun.

Calderon's Dorothea was not hated because she had given her trust, but she was forsaken because she had done so, and then hated because the memory of wrong done to her stung a fickle fierce heart to remorse.

"Who has done the wrong, never pardons:" in love, beyond all else, is this true.

Hilarion went back to the apes in his upas-tree, because they never made him wish himself other than he was; they never recalled to him all he might have been: innocently she had done both. So he had left her.

I knew, as I say, that he would go out of Rome; and on the morrow I learned that he had done so.

I was thankful. Women hope that the dead love may revive; but men know that of all dead things none are so past recall as a dead passion.

The courtezan may scourge it with a whip of nettles back into life; but the innocent woman may wet it for ever with her tears, she will find no resurrection.

I was thankful, for it was best so; yet if I could have hated him more than I did it would have been for his obedience to me.

To be near her, yet not even look upon her face!—I forgot

that hardly could he care to look on it much more than a murderer cares to look on the thing he has stifled and thrust away into the earth. "Why could he not have left her in peace?" I said, again and again. No doubt he often asked himself so; for men are not base; they are children.

Maryx all this while I never saw. I believed that although he had refused to give his promise, he would not harm her lover for her sake; but I knew nothing: I only knew that Hilarion passed out of Rome, as he had entered it, in safety.

The nightingales sang through all the long lovely springtide nights under the myrtles on the Golden Hill, but their master never came out to hear them, nor heeded that the summer drew nigh.

Art is an angel of God, but when Love has entered the soul, the angel unfolds its plumes and takes flight, and the wind of its wings withers as it passes. He whom it has left misses the angel at his ear, but he is alone for ever. Sometimes it will seem to him then that it had been no angel ever, but a fiend that lied, making him waste his years in a barren toil, and his nights in a joyless passion; for there are two things beside which all Art is but a mockery and a curse: they are a child that is dying and a love that is lost.

Meanwhile she grew thinner and thinner and taller still, as it seemed, and the colourless fairness of her face had the pallid whiteness of the stephanotis flower, and she was lovely still, but it was a loveliness which had a certain terror in it for those who saw her, though such were only the poor of the city.

"She has the look of our Beatrice," said one woman who cleaned the stone stairs of Barberini, sometimes, and knew those haunting eyes that have all the woe of all creation in their appeal.

And what to me was the most hopeless sorrow of all was this, that every memory and impulse of art seemed extinct in her. What had once been the exclusive passion of her life seemed to have been trodden down and stamped out by the yet more absolute and yet more tyrannical passion which had dethroned it; as a great storm wave rises, and sweeps over, and effaces, all landmarks and dwellings of the earth wherever it reaches, so had the passion of Hilarion swept away every other thought and feeling.

The sickness and the sorrow round her she would do her best to help, going from one to another, silent and afraid of no

pestilence. The people were afraid of her, but she was never so of them, even when the breath of their lips was death.

To the little children she was very tender, she, who had never seemed even to see that the children played in the sun, or smiled at their mother's bosoms; and she would touch them gently, and a great anguish would come into her eyes, that now were always so wistful, and strained and full of hopeless longing, like the eyes of a captive animal.

"You must love these people that you serve them so," said a priest to her one day, meeting her where the pestilence raged.

"No," she answered him, "I am only sorry for them. I am sorry for anything that lives."

And it was the truth. Her heart had opened to pity, but it was closed to all save one love.

It was a summer heavy and sickly. Wan, fever-worn children glided through the streets; the little bell, that told of passing souls needing the church's sacraments, rang ceaselessly; by daylight and by torchlight the black figures of the beccamorti passed along the beautiful, solemn, empty ways, where the sun burned and the dust drifted; the heat lay on the city like a pall, and the wide, scorched, yellow plain was like a basin of brass beneath the unchanging pale blue of the sky.

For myself I had borne such seasons before, and had been unharmed; but for her I was anxious. Yet she seemed to feel no change in the weather, nor in the aspect of the city around her; she was vaguely oppressed, and would lie for hours motionless in the darkened rooms, and would drag herself outward with effort, only if she heard of any in need; but she never made any lament. To physical discomfort she had always been indifferent, and I think of it now she was insensible.

In the heats of summer I would have had her take some sort of change, but, as before, she refused to leave Rome.

"It is here that he will seek me if he want me—ever," she said; and I, thinking of the cruel truths that he had uttered in the moonlight by the Temple of Agrippa, felt my very heart grow cold.

"Oh, my dear! oh, my child! you perish for a dream," I said, and dared say no more.

She smiled faintly, a smile that hurt one more than other women's weeping.

"In your dream Love brought the poppy flowers, but that I do not understand. How *can* one die while what one loves still

lives? To lie a dead thing in the cold, and the dark, while others——"

A shudder shook her; the Greek-like temper in her recoiled from the Christian horrors of the grave. With him she would have gone to her grave as a child to its mother; but without him——if she were dead under the sod, or walled in the stones of a crypt, it seemed to her that she would wake and rise, when the lips of others touched him.

Alas! alas! she never thought of him save as alone. She never knew what were those apes which jabbered in the bay-tree of his fame and passions. He was still sacred to her, with the sublime sanctity of a great love which enfolds the thing it cherishes as with the divine mist, which of old veiled the gods.

Whoever can still love thus is happy—ay, even in wretchedness, even when alone. It is when the mist has dissolved, as the mists of the morning, and the nakedness and the deformity and the scars which it hid are disclosed, it is then, and then only, that we are miserable beyond all reach of solace, and can have no refuge but in the eternal oblivion of that death which then we know can be only a forgetting and an end, without hope.

She stayed all the summer in Rome.

One day a thought struck me. It was early in the morning, and the heaviness of the weather had lifted a little, a few showers having fallen, and it was just so golden and white and sunny a morning as that when I had fallen asleep before the Ariadnê in Borghese, with rosy mists upon the mountain heights, and breadths of amber light upon the river, and tender little clouds that flew before the breeze and promised rain at sunset.

A thought struck me, and I allured her into the open air while yet it was very early, and bent her steps—she not heeding whither she went—across the Tiber to the Scala Regia of the Vatican.

"Come hither with me; I have business here," I said to her; and she came, not hearing at all most probably, for her mind was almost always plunged so deeply into the memories of her dead joy that it was easy to guide her where one would.

Sometimes I fancied she had not wholly yet all clearness of her reason; but there I was wrong; she was quite sane, only she had but one thought night and day.

They knew me well at that mighty place, and had always orders to let me pass.

I took her up the immense stairways that seemed builded for

some palace of Hercules, and the wide, still solemn passages and corridors, where all the arts of the whole world's innumerable centuries seem to be so near one, from the golden crowns of the Etruscan Larthia to the flower garlands of Raffaelle's scholars.

I took her into the galleries which she had never entered since the days when she had studied there the humblest yet the proudest of Art's acolytes. It was eight in the morning; there was no one near; the vast chambers seemed countless like the centuries they held embalmed. We went past the sarcophagi and the stones from the tombs, past the colossal heads and the cinerary urns; past the vases of porphyry and agates and chalcedony, and the deep, serene-eyed faces of the gods, and so into the Chiaramonti gallery; past the Gannymede of Leucares and the colossal Isis, and the olive presses of the Nonii, to the spot where what I had once owned was standing, between the radiated jasper of the Assyrian basin, and the yellow marble of the Volscian Jove; near the grand bust of Cæsar as high pontiff, and the sculptured legend of Alkestis, which Evhodus has inscribed to his "very dear and very blessed wife, Metilia Acte." For there *is* love which lives beyond the tomb.

There my Hermes was, well companioned and better sheltered than with me, beneath those noble arched roofs, amidst those endless processions of gods and of heroes, and of emperors; but for myself, you know, as I have said, it always seemed to me that the smile had passed off the mouth of the statue.

Of course it was a foolish and vain fancy; for what could a few years spent in a poor man's chamber matter to a creature endowed with that splendid life of marbles which counts by centuries and cycles, and sees whole dynasties and nations roll away?

She walked with me down the long gallery, cold even in the midsummer morning; and she looked neither to right nor left, but into vacancy always, for she saw nothing that was around her, or at the least cared not for it, because all memories of the art she had adored seemed to have perished in her. I laid my hand upon her shoulder, and made her pause before the Mercury. I said to her:

"Look. He was a friend to you once. Will you pass him by now?"

She lifted her eyes with an effort, and rested them on the pentelic stone of the statue.

Hermes' head was slightly bent downward, like that most beautiful Hermes of the Belvidere.

His gaze seemed to meet hers.

A thrill ran through her. She stood and looked upward at the calm, drooped face.

"It is your Greek god!" she said; and then was still, and there seemed to fall on her that strange, mystical, divine tranquility which does lie in the glance of all great statues, whether from the rude sphynx that lies couchant in the desert, or the perfect godhead that was brought to Rome from the seashore by Antium.

Its own calm seemed to fall upon her.

Then hot tears filled her eyes, and fell slowly down her pale cheeks.

"Once I too could make the marbles speak!" she murmured; and her fainting soul stirred in her, and awoke to a sense of its own lost power.

She did not ask how it was that Hermes was here in the palace of the pope—not then; she stood looking at the statue, and seeming, as it were, slowly to gather from it remembrance and strength, and the desires of art, and the secrets of art's creation.

That desire of genius which in the artist never wholly dies, and makes the painter in the swoon of death behold golden horizons and lovely cities of the clouds, and the musician hear the music of the spheres, and the poet rave of worlds beyond the sun; that desire, or instinct, or power, be it what it will, woke in her at the feet of Hermes; Hermes, who had seen all her effort and watched all her dreams, and been the silent witness of those first kisses of passion which had burned away her genius beneath them.

She sat down by the zacchus of the statue, on the great lion's head, that bore, with three others like it, the burden of the oval jasper basin.

She was lost in thought. I did not speak to her. The early light of morning streamed through the length of the gallery. Her face had the pained bewilderment of one who, after long unconsciousness and exhaustion, recovers little by little the memories and the forces of life.

Here, if anywhere in the "divine city of the Vatican"—for in truth a city and divine it is, and well has it been called so—here, if anywhere, will wake the soul of the artist; here, where the very pavement bears the story of Odyssus, and each passage-way is a Via Sacra, and every stone is old with years

whose tale is told by hundreds or by thousands, and the wounded Adonis can be adored beside the tempted Christ of Sistine, and the serious beauty of the Erythean Sybil, lives beside the laughing grace of ivy-crowned Thalia, and the Jupiter Maximus frowns on the mortals made of earth's dust, and the Jehovah who has called forth woman meets the first smile of Eve. A Divine City indeed, holding in its innumerable chambers and its courts of granite and of porphyry all that man has ever dreamed of, in his hope and in his terror, of the Unknown God.

She sat quite still a long while, while the sunbeams came in from on high, and the grave guardians of the place paced behind the grating. There was no sound at all anywhere, except the sound of the distant water falling in the gardens without, farther away beyond the home of the Muses and of the Apollo Musagetes.

Then suddenly she rose and looked again at the statue.

"This has lived two thousand years and more, and men still say it is beautiful. I tried to make such a statue of him, so that his beauty should live always. I will try once more. Other women could not do that. Perhaps the world will praise it, and he will see it, and then he will know——"

Know how well she loved him still! Ah, that he knew too well! Men like Hilarion never distrust their own power to keep what once is theirs. Only after a little they do not want it; so they leave it—that is all.

"Let us go home," she said with eager haste, the first sign of eagerness that I had seen in her since I had brought her to the Tiber's side. "Let us go home. I will work there in the tower. You shall get me marble—the old marble of Luna, the Etruscan marble—and I will try; then perhaps the world will keep it as it has kept Hermes; and me they will forget, but him never. It is the statues that live, not the sculptor."

And then for a moment, in that loneliness of the Chiaramonte, she leaned against the Greek god, and laid her lips to his cold pure limbs, as she had done to the stones of the hearth in my chamber.

"He used to caress you," she murmured to the marble. "Dear god, give me strength!"

Then we went silently through the Braccio Nuovo, past the bronze Augustus, fit master of the world, and Titus's hive of honey; between the Corinthian columns and past the pillars of

red granite, over the mosaics of the shining floor, and so through many halls and corridors into the open air of the gardens. It was early morning, and the birds were astir in the thick walls of the clipped box and ilex; blue butterflies flew over the old Latin tombstones; lizards ran in between the blossoming orange-hedges; here and there a late-fallen fruit had tumbled, a ball of gold, upon the grass.

These gardens are green valleys full of fragrance and shadow; behind them, like their mountain alp, is the great dome, altering from white to purple, as the day passes and the clouds change.

"Tell me," she said, below her breath, as we paced amongst the trees, "why is the Hermes there? I can remember nothing, only——"

Walking between the tall walls of leaf and bough, I took courage and told her of the things that I had done and the sorrow I had suffered since I had seen the sail upon the sea.

For the first time she wept for us, not for him.

"And I am thankless—only thankless!" she murmured. "Oh, why love me so much, you two for whom I have no love!"

I heard the birds singing in the orange-flowers, and the bees hum in the fountain's edge, and they only sounded sad and harsh to me.

"My dear, love is given, not bought," I said to her. "That is all."

CHAPTER XXXVI.

THAT very night I made a sculptor's workroom in the tower, and I had brought thither the earths and planes and tools of the glyptic art, and once more that desire to create entered into her without which the soul which has been once possessed by it is dumb as a flute without the breath of man, is empty as a temple whose gods have been overthrown.

The passion which consumed her would at least find some vent and solace in this—so I thought; even if, as I feared

greatly, the genius in her might no more revive than can a flower that has been scorched by the noon sun and then frozen by the night. I did not know how this might prove; any way, obedient to her wish, I placed within her reach all the material necessaries of sculpture, and left her alone to summon what vision she would. Alas! no visions were possible to her now—on the silver of the sunlight, as on the blackness of the darkness, she saw only one face.

Shut in her tower, where only the pigeons saw her, flying about the high casements to their homes in the roof, she held communion with that art which now was in her only another form of love. In the marbles she only saw his features and his form: as the soft winds touched her cheek, she thought of his kisses; when the stars shone on her, she thought only of his eyes;—love is an absolute possession of all the senses and all the soul, or it is nothing.

Therefore there are few who know love: as there are few who are great, or do heroic deeds, or know or attain to anything which demands intensity of character.

"Do not enter there," she said to me, meaning this highest place under the roof, where the sun shone on the clay and the stones. "If I can content myself—ever—then I will tell you. But it escapes me——;" and she would sit for hours silent and looking into vacancy, striving, no doubt, to recall that power which had passed away from her; that mystical power of artistic creation which is no more to be commanded than it can be explained.

Sometimes I was half afraid of what I had done, for she grew weaker and more feverish, it seemed to me, and would not stir from the place in the heavy torrid weather, when the very dogs in the streets could scarcely drag their limbs from sun to shadow; and sometimes I could have beaten out my brains against the wall because I had had that accursed dream in Borghese, and now had to watch its slow fulfilment and could do nothing: for the Roman woman had said, justly, "Either the temple of Lubentina, or death."

There was no middle course between the two. And who could wish her less faithful even to the faithless, since by fidelity alone is love lifted from the beast into the god?

So months passed by, and she remained all the long empty days shut there with the dumb clays and the Carrara marbles, that would lie there blocks of poor pale stone, till she could bid them arise and speak.

Sometimes the artist's creation is spontaneous, electric, full of sudden and eager joys, like the birth of love itself: sometimes it is accomplished only with sore travail, and many pangs and sleepless nights, like the birth of children. Whether the offspring of joy or of pain be the holiest and the strongest, who shall say?—is our lady of San Sisto or the Delphic Sibyl worth the most?

All this time I never saw the one whose pleasure it had been to teach her the gladness of laborious days, and all the secrets of the arts that say to the wood and the stone, "Tell men the vision we have had of heaven." He did not summon me, and I did not dare to seek him.

I saw the old mother, who grew quite blind, and who struck her staff at the empty air, and said to me, "So would I strike the girl were she here; was she blind like me that she could not see a great life at her feet?"

One night Giulio, the foreman, said to me, "The master has been ill; we were very afraid."

It seemed that the fever of our city, which had never touched Maryx once in all the five and twenty years which had passed since he had first stood by the white lions in the portico of Villa Medicia, had taken hold on him in this unhealthy and burning summer.

I suppose the fever comes up from the soil;—our marvellous soil that, like the water of our springs and fountains, never changes take it away or shut it up as you may, and bears such lovely luxuriance of leaf and blossoms;—because the earth here has all been so scorched through and through with blood, and every handsbreadth of its space is as it were a sepulchre, and the lush grass, and the violets that are sweeter here than ever they are elsewhere, and all the delicious moist hanging mosses and herbs and ferns are, after all, so rich, because born from the bodies of virgins and martyrs, and heroes, and all the nameless millions that lie buried here.

Blood must have soaked through the soil deeper than any tree can plunge its roots:—ten thousand animals would be slaughtered in the circus in a day, not to speak of men:—however, come whence it may, the fever, that even Horace feared, is here always, and terrible in our Rome, above all, when the first great rains come; and at last, after letting him go free of it five and twenty years, the fever had struck down Maryx.

But he had never lain down under it nor seen any physician;

it had only wasted and worn him, as the slow fire at the roots wastes and wears the trunk of a doomed tree, that the charcoal-burners have marked: that was all.

I had not dared to go to him, but one night when I sat by my stall, with Palès sleeping, and the lamp swinging, and the people standing or lying about to get a breath of air, though no air was there under the sultry skies, Maryx touched me on the shoulder. He was very enfeebled, he leaned upon a stick, and his face was pale and haggard, and the look of age, of old age, had deepened on his face, whilst yet he was in the prime of his manhood.

I rose and looked in his face, for indeed before him I felt always so much remorse, that I felt as a criminal in his presence; I, who had dared to meddle with Fate and compel it.

"I am grieved"—I began to him, and then I could not end the phrase, for all words seemed so trite and useless between him and me, and like an insult to him.

"I know," he said gently. "Yes; I have been ill; it does not matter. For the first time I have been glad that my mother was blind."

"I did not dare to ask to see you."

"No, I understand. He has been in Rome?"

"Yes; months since."

"I knew. Tell her I broke my oath for her sake. I shut myself in my house. If I had seen him——"

His lips closed with no more spoken, but there was no necessity for words.

I told him what had passed between me and Hilarion by the church of Agrippa. He heard in silence, sitting on the bench from which I had risen. The blood rose over his wasted features, pale with the terrible pallor of dark skins.

When I had ended he smiled a little drearily.

"That is the love that women choose—God help them!"

Then he was silent, and as the lamp-light fell on him, I thought his face looked darker, wearier, older than it had done a few moments earlier. For there is nothing more piteous than the waste of a great nature which gives all its gold;—to see dross preferred.

"He was kinder to the dog he slew!" he said, and he drew his breath heavily and with labour, as he spoke.

"And the dog—he regretted," I answered, for my heart was hard as a flint against Hilarion, and I would fain have heard another curse him as I cursed him.

But the hatred of Maryx was too deep for words; and beyond even his hate was his infinite yearning of pity for her and the sickness of loathing that filled his soul. To one who had loved her with a lover's love, her fate was horrible as it could not be even to me, an old man, and only her friend.

He sat still in the light of my poor dull lamp, and the people went by and he saw nothing of them, and the water fell down from the wall behind him, and looked like gleaming sabres crossed.

"I would not promise," he muttered, very low: "but I will hold my hand while I can. She told me—I have no right!"

That had been the bitterest word that she had uttered to him: he had no right, none upon earth; he who had lost all peace, all ambition, all art, all happiness, through her; and for her would have lost the world and his own soul.

"We have no right, you and I," he said once more, and then he rose up with that dreary dejection of movement which makes the limbs drag like leaden weights when the spirit within is broken.

"She wants for nothing?" he asked abruptly.

"Nothing that we can give."

"If I can serve her, come to me. If not, let her forget that I live, whilst I do live. This fever kills in time, they say. I shall not complain when the time comes. Good night."

Then his hand, which was dry and hot with the malady within him, pressed mine, and he went away slowly, walking with bent head, as old men do.

I thought of the day when he had come past my board with vigorous, elastic steps, and his bold, brilliant eyes, bright as an eagle's; the day when he had taken up the Wingless Love.

Alas, what love that is love indeed bears wings? Love that is love is fettered where it is born, and stirs not, even under any rain of blows.

"Maryx is ill," I said to her on the morrow.

"I am sorry," she said, and looked pained.

"Will you not see him?—say some gentle word?"

"I cannot, to be faithful."

"Faithful to the faithless! That is asked of none."

Her face gathered upon it that look of resolution and of force which made its delicate lines severe, as the features of the Athene to whom her youth had been dedicated. The flush of a

deep emotion, that in another would have been shame, but in her was rather anger than shame, burned on her face.

"To be faithful is no virtue; but only women that are vile can be faithless. It is nothing what one is asked; it is what one is, what one wills, that matters."

I remember how in the early days she had scorned Ariadnê, saying that Ariadnê should have died ere Dionysos scaled the rock.

Fidelity in her was purification—nay, was innocence that needed no purification; and not alone innocence, but supreme duty and joy that defied all cruelty of man to bruise it much, or utterly to destroy it.

She knew not enough of human nature and human ways and the evil thereof, to understand all that faithless women were; but the instinct in her recoiled from them not less with scorn than horror. Faith to Hilarion was in her nature what faith in heaven was to the martyrs, whose bones lie here in the eternal night of subterranean Rome. It was a religion, an instinct, and a paradise—a paradise whence not even the silence and the abandonment of the god by whom she was forsaken could drive her out wholly into darkness.

For in a great love there is a self-sustaining strength by which it lives, deprived of everything, as there are plants that live upon our barren ruins burned by the sun, and parched and shelterless, yet ever lifting green leaves to the light.

CHAPTER XXXVII.

The months went on, and seemed to me to creep as blind worms creep, and to do no more good than they to any living soul.

All these months she had shut herself in the studio of her tower, not stirring out, and only breathing the fresher air of night from one of her barred casements, when the sun was setting, or the stars had come out from the dark blue of Roman skies. For me, I stitched at my stall, and Palès, growing older, slept more, and grew more sharp of tooth and temper; and there were

many changes amongst my neighbours, right and left, and many marriage groups went by, and many biers; but nothing touched me much, and all I cared to think of was of her, my Ariadnê.

One day—it might perhaps be six or seven months after the day that I had led her through the Chiaramonti Gallery to Hermes—when I had gone to ask for her, as never a day passed but I did do, and Ersilia also, she opened the door of her lofty studio and came down a few of the stone stairs to my side.

"Come," she said to me; and then I knew that she had found her strength and compassed some great labour.

The studio was a wide and lofty place, with walls and floor of stone, and narrow windows that opened in their centre on a hinge, and the plants that grew upon the roof hung down before their bars, and the pigeons flew in and out in the daytime.

"Look," she said, and led me in and let me stand before the statue she had made, and which she had herself cut out from the block, and shaped in every line, till it stood there, a white and wondrous thing, erect in the sunlight shining from the skies, and seemed to live, nay, to leap forth to life as the Apollo does in Belvidere.

It was the same form that she had made in the clay at Venice and at Paris; that is, it was Hilarion: the man made god, by the deifying power of the passion which thus beheld him. Every curve of the slender and symmetrical limbs was his, every line of the harmonious and Greek-like features his also; but it was no longer a mortal, it was a divinity; and about his feet played an ape and an asp, and in his hand he held a dead bird, and he looked at the bird in weariness and doubt.

That was all.

There was no other allegory. She knew that marble must speak in the simplest words, as poets spake of old, or not at all.

Marble must be for ever the Homer of the arts; ceasing to be that, as it does cease if it be wreathed with ornament or tortured into metaphor, it ceases also to be art. Marble must speak to the people as it did of old over the blue Ægean sea and under the woods of Pelion, or be dumb—a mere tricked-out doll of fancy and of fashion.

She knew this, she who had been trained by Maryx; and even had she forgotten his teachings, her own genius, cast on broad and noble lines, would have obeyed the axiom by instinct.

I stood silent and amazed before the statue; amazed because the spiritualized and perfect beauty given in it to Hilarion

seemed to me the most amazing pardon that a woman's forgiveness ever on this earth bestowed; silent, because I, who had dwelt among sculptors all my years, could never have conceived it possible for her to give to any shape of stone such vitality, such proportion, such anatomical perfection, such personal sublimity as were all here.

It was a great work; it would have been great in Athens, and was how much greater in this modern age! And she was only a woman, and so young.

"Oh, my dear! oh, my dear!" I cried out to her, standing before it. "Athene is with you still. You have the clue and the sword. Oh, my dear, with such gifts praise heaven! What does the pain or the loss in life matter. You are great!"

She looked at me from under her lovely low brows and her half-falling hair, as the Ariadnê of the Capitol looks at you; only with a look more intense—a look of deep pity, deeper scorn.

"Is that all that you know! Great! What use is that? I could not kill the ape and the asp. Perhaps he would not have left me if I had been foolish and like other women."

I like an idiot cried out—

"You blaspheme, and against yourself! The god's gifts are greater than his. You have the clue and the sword. How can you care? Let him perish, the ingrate and fool!"

The look in her eyes grew darker and deeper with sadness and scorn. She turned from me with almost aversion.

"I have only created it that he may see it, and that others may still see his face when I shall have been dead a thousand years; for it will be of him they will think, not of me."

Then she was silent, and I could have spoken mad words against him, but I dared not; and I thought of the Daphne of Borghese with the laurel growing out of her breast, the laurel that always is bitter, and that hurts when it springs from the heart of a woman.

"Oh, my dear," I said humbly to her, "be grateful; you have the gifts that a million of mortals live and die without ever even comprehending. Be not thankless; genius is consolation."

"For all but one thing," she said very low; and her eyelids were wet.

And indeed after all there is nothing more cruel than the impotence of genius to hold and keep those commonest joys and mere natural affections which dullards and worse than dullards

rejoice in at their pleasure; the common human things, whose loss makes the great possessions of its imperial powers all valueless and vain as harps unstrung, or as lutes that are broken.

"It is very beautiful, and it is very great," I said to her, and said but barren truth.

"It is himself," she answered.

"What will you call it?"

"Only—a poet."

"You will let it go out to the world, surely?"

"Yes, that he may see it."

"You think he will come to you?"

She shrank a little, as if one had stung her.

"No: he will not come back; no. But perhaps he will remember a little, and drive the asps and the apes away. If I could pray as the women pray in the churches, that is all I would ask; nothing else—nothing else."

"My God! How can you forgive like that?"

"To love at all, is that not always to forgive?"

Then a heavy sigh parted her beautiful lips that were now so pale yet still so proud, and she went away from my presence and left me alone with the marble. Had it not been her creation I think I should have struck the statue, and cursed it, and cast it down headlong; as of old, they cast the false gods.

That day I went and sought Maryx. The fever had passed from him with the heats of summer, and the perilous rains of the autumn, and its agues and its fires had ceased to chill and burn him turn by turn. But he was weakened and aged, and never, so Giulio told me, touched the plane or the chisel; his workmen he paid as of yore, but the workrooms were locked.

I asked to see him, and I told him.

"You bade me say how you could serve her," I said to him. "You can serve her now. I am an old man and poor, and obscure, I can do nothing; will you let the great world see her work? Of no other man could I ask such a thing after—after, —but you are not like others."

His heart heaved, and the nerves of his cheek quivered, but he pressed my hand.

"I thank you that you know me well enough. What I can do I will. She was my pupil. I owe her such simple service as that."

"The work is great," I said to him. "I thought it might bring her fame, and fame consoles."

Maryx smiled; a weary smile.

"Does it? Those who have it not, think so; yes, I dare say."

"But if it do not console it may do something at the least; light some other passion, ambition, pride, desire of achievement, all an artist feels! If she can gather the laurel, let her. At the least, it will be better than love."

"She shall gather it," said he, who had been her master; and he came out with me into the night. It was a cold clear night, and the stars shone on the river.

"I have gathered it," he added. "Well, I would change places with any beggar that crawls home to night."

I could not answer him.

We walked through the city in silence, he had lost his strength and his elasticity of movement, but he bore himself erect, and something of the vigour of energy had returned to him—since he could serve her.

Her tower was far from the Golden Hill; he had never entered it; but I had the keys of her working-room, and I knew that at this hour she slept, or at least lay on her bed, shut in her chamber if sleepless. On the threshold of the studio I paused, frightened, for it seemed to me cruel to bring him there, and yet he was obliged to see the statue if he meant to help her to fame.

"Perhaps you had better not see it," I muttered, "after all it is nothing, though beautiful; nothing except—Hilarion."

His face did not change, as I watched it with fear in the dull yellow lamplight.

"It could be nothing else, being her work. Open."

My hands shook at the lock; I felt afraid. If I had longed to take a mallet to beat its beauty down into atoms and dust, what might not he do, he who had struck the Nausicaa as men strike a faithless wife?

He took the key from me, and thrust it into the door.

"What do you fear?" he said. "Shall I harm the stone when I have let the man live?"

Then he opened the door and entered. I had left a lamp burning there; a lamp that swung on a chain hung from above, and was immediately above the head of the statue. The stream of soft golden light from the burning olive oil fell full on the serene beauty of the figure, holding the dead nightingale in its hand, with doubt upon its features that was not regret.

A strong shudder shook Maryx.

I drew the door to, and waited without. It seemed to me that I waited hours, but no doubt they were only minutes. When the door unclosed, and he came forth from the chamber, he was calm and his face was only stern.

"It is a great work; it would be great for a great man. It will give her fame. It shall give it to her. You look strangely? What do you fear? Am I so base as not to serve the genius I fostered? My genius is dead: hers lives. That I can serve at least."

"You can reach such nobility as that!"

"I see nothing noble. I am not quite base, that is all. Tell her—nay, I forgot; she must not know that it is I who do anything—else you should tell her that her master thanks her."

And with that brave and tender word he left me and went out into the darkness.

It seemed to me that his forgiveness was greater even than hers: since even greater than hers was his loss.

Now when the springtime of that year came, the world of the arts spoke only of one great piece of sculpture, shown in the public halls, where Paris holds its rivalry of muses.

Before this statue of the poet all the great world paused in awe and ecstasy.

"Is it the work of Maryx?" asked one half the world, and the other half answered:

"No! It is greater than any work of Maryx."

And before the new youthful strength thus arisen they slighted and spoke ill of the great strength that had been as a giant's in the past.

So had he his reward.

CHAPTER XXXVIII.

When he had gone away that evening and I had returned to the studio to put out the lights, and see that all was safe, it being past midnight, I found her there, beside the work of her hands. A long, loose, white robe clung close to her, and fell

about her feet; she looked taller, whiter, lovelier, perhaps, than ever, but it seemed to me that there was in her beauty something unearthly; one could have imagined her to be that Sospitra of her lover's poem, who was lifted above all earthly woes, save the two supreme sorrows—Love and Death.

She sat down on the wooden bench that stood near the statue and motioned me to stay.

"You brought Maryx here?" she asked me.

"Yes: I thought you were asleep."

"I seldom sleep—in my chamber I could hear your voices, but not what you said. Does it seem good to him—what I have done?"

"It seems great."

Then I told her all that he said to me; and the noble soul of him seemed to me to shine through the words like the light through a lamp of alabaster; and I saw that they touched her deeply. Her sad eyes gathered moisture in them, and her grand mouth, always so resolutely closed as though afraid that any reproach of her lost lover should escape them, trembled and grew soft.

"He is too good to me," she said at length. "Oh, why was I born only to bring so much misery to others!"

"Nay, there is some misery dearer to us than joy," said I. "Maryx loves you."

A shudder ran through her and she stopped me.

"Never speak of love to me. A woman faithful will not even think that any can feel love for her—save one; it is almost infidelity."

"Nay, I spoke not of love so; would I insult you? I mean simply and truly that his love for you is great enough to vanquish any remembrance of himself; great enough too to make him hold his hand because you bid him: greater there cannot be."

She put out her hand to silence me.

"He received me into his house when I had no friend and no hope in the world, and he w so good to me. If he would but forget me! I have been thankless. He taught me the strength and the secrets of the arts, and I have given him in return only pain and ingratitude."

"Dear, it is on pain that love lives longest."

Alas! that she knew. She was silent some moments, whilst above her rose the beauty of her own creation.

Since she had returned to the pursuit and the occupation of art, the youth in her had revived; the numbness and deadness which had seemed like a half-paralysed intelligence had passed off her; she had gathered up the clue and lifted up the sword, and though it was love that nerved her and not art, the effort had brought back inspiration, and inspiration to the artist is the very breath of life; without it his body may live but his soul does not.

She looked at her statue with wistful eyes.

"You will send it to Paris."

"To Paris? Before showing it here?"

"Yes—he does not come here; he would not see it."

A deep flush came on the paleness of her face, as it always did at the very mention of Hilarion.

"He will know that I have made it—he will believe in it," she said a little later; "because he saw me make the Love in Venice."

"Where did that Love go?"

"It was sent from Venice in a ship; and the ship foundered, and went down, in a storm."

"And the statue was lost?"

"Yes."

She leaned her head upon her hands, so that I could not see her face; she had never before spoken to me of that time. I stood silent, thinking how terrible an augury had been that foundered Love, sunk to the bottom of the deep sea, companioned only with the dead.

Almost I longed to tell her of all that he had said by the temple of Agrippa, but I dared not; she believed that he had loved her once; I had not courage to say to her—even his first caresses were a lie!

To her Hilarion remained a creature who could do no wrong: I had not heart to say to her—there was no sort of truth in him ever, not even when he swore to you eternal faith.

"And if he do read the message of your marble," I asked her, abruptly; "if he do read it, if he be touched by it—if he come back to you, what then? Will you let him come—now?"

Her face was leaning on her hands, but I could see the blush that covered her throat and rose to her temples.

"It would be different now," she muttered. "Then I did not know—no, I did not know. I obeyed him. I had no idea that I became worthless in his sight. When you spoke to me

so bitterly in Venice, you pained me, but I did not understand; I never did until those friends of his in Paris (he called them friends) wrote to me and sent me their jewels when he was away. It is not that I care what the whole world thinks me, but to be lowered in his sight, to seem to him only a frail foolish thing like the rest——"

A great heavy sob heaved her heart; she lifted her face to mine, it was burning now, with an indignant pain in her uplifted eyes.

"Look! What does it mean?—who is to tell the ways of the world? That vile woman whom he lived with here in Rome, she is faithless and cruel and false, and betrayed him as well as her husband, and yet he goes back to her and the world sees no shame in her, though she wears his jewels about her neck, and dishonours her children. And I, who sleeping and waking, never think, but of him; who have never a thought he might not know; who am his alone, his always, in life and in eternity, if eternity there be, I am shameful, you say, and he has ceased to love me because I loved him too well:—who can understand? I cannot."

I knew not what to say to her: the laws and the ways of the world are sadly full of injustice and cast in stiff lines that fit in but ill with the changeful and wayward needs of human life: I knew not what to say.

She lapsed into silence; it was natural to her to endure; it was very seldom that any reproach escaped her either of fate or of him. Her brain perplexed itself wearily over the problem of where her fault had lain by which she had lost him; she was too loyal to see that the fault was in himself.

"Shall it go then to Paris?" I said, to lead her thoughts back to her labours.

She gave a sign of assent.

"May it be sold?"

"Ah no—never!"

"It is to come back to you, then?"

"Unless he wish for it."

"Would you give it him?"

"I have given him my life!"

"Shall I put your name on it, or will you carve it there?"

"No. Let it go as the work of a pupil of Maryx. That is true."

"Maryx thinks it will give you a fame not second to his own."

"Fame? I do not care for fame."

She looked up at the marble once more.

"Once I used to think I should like all the ages that are to come to echo my name, but that is nothing to me now. If only it may speak to him:—that is all I want. Perhaps you do not believe, because he has left me; but indeed when I was with him he heard only the nightingales, and the apes and the asps never came near. Do you remember when we walked by Nero's fields that night of Carnival, you said he was like Pheineus. But the evil spirits never had any power on him when I was there: he told me so, so often. If only by that marble I can speak to him! If one could only put one's soul and one's life into the thing one creates, and die in one's body, so as to be alive in art alone, and close to what one loves!—there are legends:——"

She wound her arms close about the white limbs of her statue, and laid her lips to them as she had done to the Hermes, and leant on the cold sculpture her beating breaking heart.

"Take my life away with you," she cried to it, "take it to him—take it to him!"

Then she broke down and wept, and sobbed bitterly, as women do.

CHAPTER XXXIX.

THE statue went to Paris, and the word and the weight of Maryx went with it, as I have said, and did for it what influence can do in a day, and genius unaided may beg for in vain through a score of years.

It was accepted by the judges of the Salon, and placed between a group of Louis Rochet's and a figure, by Paul Dubois. Maryx had had carved upon it the letters of her name: Giojà: no more. It was made known to those whom it concerned that she was a woman, and very young, and his pupil in Rome.

The statue had been unveiled but a few days when the city spoke of it and spoke of little else, wherever art was compre-

hended and talked of; it took a tired public by surprise, and its triumph was instantaneous and wide-spread.

There was something in it that was unlike all the world had ever seen; the very mystery that to many enveloped its meaning only added to its charm for the curiosity of mankind. Within a few weeks her name was a household word in the world of art: that short and happy-sounding name that was in such sad unlikeness to her destiny. She had been the original of the Nausicaa, some sculptor told them so; and then they flocked to where the Nausicaa could be seen, and talked the more of her, and some few began to say—"that is the same face as the Roman girl had who was with Hilarion."

For though the world has a shallow memory for excellence, it is always tenacious of remembrances that are hurtful, and of recollections that can tarnish renown.

One day Hilarion arrived in Paris, having been absent for a month or so: he loved all the arts, nor ever missed the fresh fruits of them; he went early to the Salon one bright morning with some associates, who were famous men in their own way, and artists. One of them, midway in the central chamber, touched him and pointed to the Roman marble.

"Look! That is the marvel of all Paris. A perfect creation, and they say the sculptor is only a woman."

Hilarion listlessly lifted his eyes to the figure: then his face lost all colour, and he approached it quickly.

"Now I see you, beside it—it is like you," said one of his friends. "Perhaps you have known her in Rome? She is a Roman, and was a pupil of Maryx, they say."

Hilarion was silent. He was very pale. He understood the parable in the stone.

His friends spoke learnedly around him, praising the work with the discriminative homage of great critics. On the base of the statue her name was cut after the habit of sculptors; he read it, and it hurt him curiously.

He stood before the figure, that was but himself made god and heeded nothing of the jests of his friends. As the sun shone all about the fair pale Carrara marble, and illumined the name cut on the stone, he felt a pang that had never before touched his cold, voluptuous self-control and fortunate life.

"Who else could love me like that!" he thought to himself; and thought also—what beasts we are, that it is not love that touches us, but the pursuit of it that we desire.

He understood that to him alone was consecrated her creation. She had striven to excel only that by excelling she might reach some place in his remembrance. The bird was dead: he repented that he had killed it.

A little later, a woman who could say to him what men could not venture to say, spoke to him of it.

"This poet is you," she said. "Who loves you like that? Was the poor bird that lies dead a mere woman, like Aedôn and Philomel?"

He answered, "Yes, but a woman without sin; the sin was mine."

And his conscience stirred in him and his heart went out to her, and he remembered her as he had seen her when he had kissed her first, and trembling she had cried to him, "It will be all my life!"

It was all her life: it had been only a summer or two of his.

The statue he would have bought if any extravagance—if half his fortune—could have purchased it; but he heard that it was in no way to be had.

In early morning, long before the men and women of his own world were astir, he rose often and went into the lonely place where the figure stood, and looked at it.

"No one else could love me like that," he thought over and over again to himself.

She had accepted her fate at his hands without reproach and without appeal; but this message sent to him in the marble, this parable in stone, moved him as no words and as no woe would have done. The faint hope with which she had sent it forth was fulfilled. He remembered—almost he repented.

He read the parable of the marble, but he stayed on with the apes and the asps, and the one mocked and beguiled him, and the others bit his tired senses into a poisonous irritation which he fancied was passion. But still when he was in solitude remembered, he regretted, almost he repented.

Meanwhile about him the great world talked of her wherever the arts were understood by men, and saluted her as a great artist. The laurel was set like a sharp spear in her breast, and was watered with her heart's blood, as with Daphne's.

Hearing that, he strove to silence his conscience, saying to himself, "Her genius is with her; it will console her in time. I have not harmed her,—so much."

One night, on an impulse, he wrote to her, and sent it through me. They were but seven words:

"I am unworthy, but I thank you.

I gave them to her. She wept over them and blessed them as other women weep over and bless the face of their firstborn. She was thankful as other women are before some great gift of homage and of honour rendered to them in the sight of nations.

To me the words seemed but poor and cold.

I could not tell then how he felt when he wrote them. I heard from him long afterwards, when all was of no use.

They did contain, indeed, perhaps the truest utterance that he had ever made. He felt his own unworthiness, he who had been wrapped all his days in the toga of a superb and indifferent and contemptuous vanity, and the sense of it wounded and galled him; yet he thanked her because he had a heart in his breast, and because, as he said, men are not vile, they are only children—children spoilt often by the world's indulgence or by the world's injustice.

He would go, I say, in the early morning, when none of his own world were about, and stand before the statue and think of her till a great shame entered into him and a great regret.

An angel comes once in their lives to most men: seldom do they know their visitant; often do they thrust the door against it. Any way, it never comes but once. He recognised the angel now; nay, he had known it when first he had opened his arms to it; but it had brought too pure a breath of heaven with it: he had put it away and gone back to the apes and the asps; and the marble looked at him, and its parable smote him into remembrance and regret.

But he did not return; for he had not loved her.

Besides he did not dare to take to this creature who still loved him and who dwelt under the shield of Athene, merely more shame again. He did not dare to look in those clear eyes which saw the faces of the immortals, and say, "I never loved you; I only ruined your life out of a vain caprice."

She, wearing out her years in silence and solitude for his sake in that loneliness which is more bitter and sorrowful than any widowhood, would not have touched him; but she, with the clue and the sword in her hands and the laurel in her breast, regained a place in his remembrance, and haunted him.

The dead he would have forgotten; but this living woman, of whom the world spoke, whom it crowned, who had the supreme powers of art, and threw them down at his feet and

dedicated them to him alone, this living woman he could not forget, and he said again and again to himself, "Who else could love me like that?"

There are men whom the entire consciousness of the perfect possession of a woman's life makes indifferent: there is no need to guard what will not stray: such men need the spur of uncertainty, the stimulant of rivalry; this is why innocent women fail and vile women succeed. Hilarion was one of these men; the absolute consecration of her, body and soul, to himself did not cement but only loosened the bonds that bound him.

"She will always be there," he had said to himself. So he had left her and had strayed to those of whom he was not so sure.

The faint unformed jealousy which now rose in him of Maryx drew his thoughts back to her as no sense of her living and dying for his sake could ever have done. He could not tell that Maryx never even saw her face. He could not know that she had refused to see her master, and that Maryx of his own will shrank from any approach to her.

He heard that Maryx had placed her talent before the world, and heard all men speak the name of her teacher in company with hers; a vague irritation, which was not worthy of a better name, stirred in him: he knew they were both in Rome.

It was his perception of the love of Maryx for her which had first made him subjugate her to his own passion. The affinity of Maryx to her in this, their common, art stirred in him a restless annoyance which only was not jealousy, because he knew her too well and because he loved her too little.

He knew that she to himself would be for ever faithful; but though he knew this, he did not like to think that any other lived who could render her that loyalty, that tenderness, that service in which his own passion had been lacking. He knew well that she would live and die alone; but he did not care to think that a greater than himself could call to her consolation in her solitude the gifts and the arms of Athene.

He knew himself to be very base in this; but when the world speaking of her said, "She was the pupil of Maryx," he felt a contemptuous impatience; when they said "She was a mistress of Hilarion," he was content. He knew that this was very base, so base that seeing it in any other man he would have called it the dishonour of a knave. Yet so it was.

And still there were times when standing before the marble

in the pure morning light, he thought with many a pang of that young life which had been as pure as the light of day ere he had clouded it; and his conscience smote him sorely, because by his act, and by his will, for ever there would lie across the lustre of her fame the heavy shadow of the world's reproach.

"You grow dull," said the apes and the asps to him; and he made them no answer: he had always forgotten all things so easily, and now,—for once,—he could not forget.

Meanwhile Maryx was also in Paris.

He had not yielded to any other the care of her labour, nor let any chance escape him of being first to do her service. When he heard and read, as he did, that her work was declared greater than his own (for the world is very mutable and false to its own idols) he was glad—for her sake. He knew that it was not so, but the strong alone can be generous.

He was thankful that by any means of his, Art could console her; the divine Dionysos, who came to her in her loneliness on Naxos, amidst the salt sea, and who might perchance make the barren rock bloom with flowers for her once more.

When the fame of the statue was certain, and all Paris, and thus all the world, spoke of it, he returned to us.

"Will she see me—now?" he asked me.

I answered him—yes.

The day had been chill; it was evening time; lamps that swung from cords shed a faint light in her studio as he entered; she rose and went to him. I saw him shiver and move a step backward involuntarily: then he controlled himself.

"I have done what I could," he said; and then his voice was choked in his throat.

She looked up into his eyes.

"You will not hurt him?"

"No."

Then she took his hands in hers.

"You are my master and my friend: I thank you."

He shivered again at her touch; but the brave soul in him kept silence.

"Dear:—you are my pupil no more," he said, with a smile, —ah! the courage of that smile! "You are greater than I; the world says so."

"The world is foolish," she answered. "If I be great in any way, it is by you alone."

"Nay—by Athene!" he said, and strove to smile again.

He left her very soon.

To remain near her was beyond his strength. We went together down the dusky stairs and out into the night.

We went on in silence through the city towards the river's banks.

"She looks ill," he said abruptly, once.

"Oh no—oh no," I said, with feverish denial. "She seldom sleeps, I think; and now that the marble is gone—her life seems gone away with it. That is all—that is all!"

"All!" he echoed: and walked on in silence.

We came upon the moonlit quietness of Tiber.

"Do they indeed call her so great in Paris?" I cried, as I looked up at my own window where she had used to stand amongst the bean flowers to watch the river on just such a night as this one was.

"Yes. They have crowned her there; and they say,—'A great genius?—yes,—she was one of the loves of Hilarion.' That is what they say, almost always."

"And yet we let him live."

"She wishes it. Have we a right to make her more desolate?"

I did not answer him. I was sick of heart. The beautiful Immortal who had come to her in her loneliness, was that offspring of Jove we call Art: must the bow of slander be bent, and the arrow of scorn be sped to slay her, as the shaft of Artemis slew Ariadnê?

Mine had been only a dream—only a dream; must she always suffer for that?

Maryx had paused, and was standing on the brink of the water, looking down into its limpid darkness. The moonlight fell on the white locks that had come about his forehead, and the lines of age that these few years had scored upon his cheeks. He was lost in thought.

"There is one hope for her," he said to himself; then said aloud to me:

"With the morning I shall return to Paris."

Then he went across the Tiber to his home upon the hill of Janus.

He went into one room and locked himself in: it was the room where she had laboured, and wher there stood the Apollo Citharœdus.

Who can tell how he prayed there and wrestled in prayer, and to what gods?

Be his god what it would, he came out thence with every nerve in him strung to a sacrifice as great as ever sent men here in Rome to martyrdom. With the grey dawn, whilst the city he loved was still wrapped in her mantle of mist, he left the lovely house that he had built for himself under the cypresses and amongst the myrtles, and passed out of Rome.

CHAPTER XL.

It was the night of the second day when he reached Paris. He went straight to the house of Hilarion.

It was seven in the evening. He was well-known there, and entered without question or hindrance.

They had been friends for a score of years.

The household showed him without hesitation into the presence of their master, who was alone, in his own chamber, with all the graceful litter collected by a luxurious and curious taste strewn round him, and the smell of flowers, for which he had a feminine fondness, was upon the air, and their blossoms were glowing against the old armour and the old sculptures, and the dark, book-lined walls of the place.

Hilarion drew a deeper breath as he saw who had entered, but he had a graceful and gracious greeting always for friend and foe.

"It is years since we met, my friend," he said; "I am glad—— "

Then he paused; for even to him it was not easy to be false of tongue to Maryx; nor did he mistake the glance that flashed for one instant from the passionate eyes that met his.

"We can be friends no more," said Maryx, yet he approached and stood by the hearth.

"Crispino went to take your life in Venice," he said slowly, standing there; "the Greek boy watched for you night and day here; I swore to kill you—and you live still, because she bids us let you live."

Hilarion was silent: he felt no resentment: brave himself

he had no anger against those who would have killed him; he thought them right.

"You make me think of the Devotio of the Romans," he said, with a passing smile. "Threatened men live long, they say."

Maryx kept down unuttered whatever passion he felt; he had nerved himself to a great unselfish effort—a last supreme sacrifice,—and was too strong to be easily shaken from his purpose.

"Listen to me," he said, calmly still. "We are wrong and she is right. To kill you would do her no service, and you perhaps no injury: what do we know! I have not come to avenge her; she told me the truth; I have no title to do it. Had she wished it, I would not have stayed my hand for that, but since she chooses to forgive you—it is not for us to make her more desolate than she is."

Hilarion interrupted him.

"Have you no title?" he said, with his coldest smile. "Surely you have one. I think you loved her yourself."

"I did: I do."

He added nothing more, and there was silence between them.

Maryx breathed heavily, and his teeth were set hard: he looked away from Hilarion, all the while he had never once looked at him; he was afraid to look at him, lest the great hate that filled his soul should vanquish the resolve on which he had come there.

"I loved her: yes," he resumed; "I should have given her peace, honour, my name, such as it is, all that one can give:—that is why I have some right to speak to you. Bear with me. I would have killed you as her father, were he living, would have done; let me speak to you as her father could not do. I am no moralist. I will read you no homily. I want but to tell you the truth as I know it. She loves you with so great a love that I think the earth never held one like it. Honest men, and lovers that are faithful, break their hearts in vain for such passion as that; and you!—nay, bear with me. You must know very well that what you did was the act of a coward—since she was defenceless, and had no god but you."

Hilarion's serene eyes lit with sudden fire, but he looked down, and he remained mute.

"There is no one to tell you all that she has suffered, nor how absolutely she forgives," said Maryx. "That is why I have come to tell you. It is just to her that you should know."

Then he told to Hilarion all that he knew himself: from the time that she had lost her reason, when the clay image had crumbled down under the blows of Amphion, to the moment, three nights before, when she had said to him himself, ere she would touch his hand, "You will not hurt him?"

It would have cost him less to have cut his heart out of his bosom than it cost him to tell the story of that changeless passion; but he told it without flinching, abating no tittle of its truth.

Hilarion heard him in unbroken silence, leaning against the oaken shelf of his hearth, with his head bent down and his eyelids drooped.

His face grew paler when he heard of her physical sufferings and needs, since it was these that he was touched by most keenly. With all the wide and varied comprehension of his intelligence, there was a certain shallowness of feeling in him which made the deepest woes of the human heart seldom intelligible to him.

"Why did the old man tell me nothing of this?" he muttered, when he had heard to the end.

"He would not tell you lest you should go to her; I tell you that you may go."

Hilarion was silent still. He could ill measure the generosity of the man who loved her vainly; but it smote him and made him feel humbled and ashamed.

"No woman, I think, ever loved you as this woman does, whom you have left as I would not leave a dog," said Maryx, and something of his old ardent eloquence returned to him, and his voice rose and rang clearer as the courage in him consummated the self-sacrifice that he had set himself for her sake. "Have you ever thought what you have done? When you have killed Art in an artist, you have done the cruellest murder that earth can behold. Other and weaker natures than hers might forget, but she never. Her fame will be short-lived as that rose, for she sees but your face, and the world will tire of that, but she will not. She can dream no more. She can only remember. Do you know what that is to the artist?—it is to be blind and to weary the world; the world that has no more pity than you have! You think her consoled because her genius has not left her: are you a poet and yet do not know that genius is only a power to suffer more and to remember longer?—nothing else. You say to yourself that he will have fame, that will

beguile her as the god came to Ariadnê: perhaps: but across that fame, let it become what it may, there will settle for ever the shadow of the world's dishonour; it will be for ever poisoned, and cursed, and embittered by the scorn of fools, and the reproach of women, since by you they have been given their lashes of nettles, and by you have been given their by-word to hoot. She will walk in the light of triumph, you say, and therefore you have not hurt her: do you not see that the fiercer that light may beat on her, the sharper will the eyes of the world search out the brand with which you have burned her. For when do men forgive force in the woman? and when do women ever forgive the woman's greatness? and when does every cur fail to snarl at the life that is higher than its fellows? It is by the very genius in her that you have had such power to wound, such power to blight and to destroy. By so long as her name shall be spoken, so long will the wrong you have done her cling round it, to make it meet for reproach. A mere woman dies, and her woe and her shame die with her, and the earth covers her and them; but such shelter is denied for ever to the woman who has genius and fame; long after she is dead she will lie out on common soil, naked and unhouselled, for all the winds to blow on her and all the carrion birds to tear."

His voice broke down for a moment, and he paused and breathed heavily and with pain. A faint dusky red of anger, yet more of shame, came on the face of Hilarion.

What was noble in him was touched and aroused; what was vain and unworthy was wounded and stung.

"I do not follow you," he muttered. "What would you have me do?"

"What? surely you know that when Paris salutes in her a great artist, it tells also the tale of her ruin by you?"

Hilarion moved restlessly.

"I know! She was seen here one winter; is it my fault? If the statue had been unlike me, Paris would not have remembered."

"That is all you say?"

"It is all there is to say; if she would forget, the world would forget too."

"Oh my God!"

Maryx groaned aloud. It seemed to him as terrible as when of old some lovely human life, in its first youth, was laid low in sacrifice to some god of stone, whose eyes of stone could not even behold in pity its death throes.

"But she will not forget. Have I told you so in vain?" he cried aloud, and his voice rose and rolled like thunder through the silence. "She will never forget,—God help her! Vile women and light ones forget; and the adulteress forgets, and the harlot: but she—can you look at that marble and insult her, still? To her you are lover and lord, and husband and king, and the only god that she knows, and the one shame of her life and its one glory. Have you no pity? have you no human heart in your breast? were you not born of a woman? You found her content and innocent, and in peace, and for your own pleasure and vanity drove all that away, and all her dreams and all her girlhood perished by you—and you only say she should forget! Can even men forget when they will?"

"I can," Hilarion answered;—and he lied.

"Is it your boast?" said Maryx, and the fierce pangs in him rose to fury, and he barely held his hand from the throat of the man who stood there.

"Well then, forget if you will, and may God forget you in recompense! Listen one moment more, and I have done. To-day I come from the presence of men who are great, and who say that never has a woman been so near greatness as she is. You know her—you, as no other can—know her pure and perfect, and without soil save such as you, in your sport, have chosen to cast on her. You know her truth and innocence so entirely that you have confessed how they shamed you and wearied you by their very excellence. She is lovely as the morning; she is yours in life and in death. What more can you want? Will you not go back to her? Will you not give honour where you have given dishonour? Will you not, when you are dying, be glad to feel one wrong the less was done? You have said she is to forget. She will only forget in her grave. Have you no pity? What can I say to move you? If you have no tenderness for such love as hers you are colder than the marble in which she has made your likeness, and lifted it up as a god to the world!"

The strength of his own emotion choked his words; he pleaded for her as never would he for his own life's sake have pleaded for himself.

Hilarion listened in silence; his eyelids were still drooped; his face was still tinged with the faint red of what was half shame, half anger.

He was shaken to the depths of his nature, but those depths

were not deep as in the nature of the man who besought him, and they had long been filled up with the slough of vanity, and of self-indulgence.

His heart thrilled, his pulse quickened, his eyes were dim, he was full of pain, even full of repentance; he thought of the young head that had lain on his breast in such faith, as the dove on its safest shelter; he felt the clinging caress of those hands which were so weak in his own, though so strong to wield the sword of Athene.

All that had ever been in him of manhood, of tenderness, of valour, yearned in one tender longing to yield to the impulse within him; but all that was vain, selfish, and cold stirred under censure and nerved him against emotion. The imperious irritation of his temper rose, and his vanity was wounded by the very shame he felt. His pride refused; his impatience of counsel chafed; and that cruel mockery which often mastered him as if it were a devil that lived in him, and were stronger than he, spurred him now to what he knew was an infamy.

He lifted his eyes slowly with a contemptuous regard, and smiled.

"You waste much eloquence," he said. "You have loved her; you love still. Console her yourself."

Maryx struck him on the mouth.

CHAPTER XLI.

To a blow there is but one answer; in our land at least.

The dawn was scarcely broken when they met again. The air was grey and windless, and cold. They did not speak a word.

Hilarion's first shot struck Maryx in the breast. Maryx had fired in the air.

He stood a moment erect, with his face to the sunrise, then fell to the ground, backward, his head striking the turf and the stones. They heard him say as he fell:

"She bade me not hurt him—I promised."

Then he lay quite still, and the blood began to well out slowly from his mouth.

The delicate and nervous hand that had hewn such lovely and majestic shapes out from the rocks, clenched the roots of the rank grasses in the convulsion of a mortal agony; in another moment it relaxed its hold and was motionless, palm upward, on the earth: never more to create, never more to obey the will of the soul and the brain.

The sun came over the low hills suddenly, and it was day. He gave one long slow shuddering sigh as his life blood choked him; then stretched his limbs out wearily, and lay there dead.

CHAPTER XLII.

AND the old mother was sitting at home blind, and telling her wooden beads, and saying in her prayers:

"Dear Mother of God, let him soon come back, for when I hear his voice I seem to see a little still; it is not all quite dark."

I sat by my stall by the bridge, and it was brilliant noontide, and the waters were glancing like satin in the sun, when the story of his death came to me. Giulio brought it to me, rushing like a mad creature down from the Golden Hill, his white hair blowing from his bare head, and his eyes seeming to leap from their sockets.

"The master! the master!" he cried, and for a long time could say no more, staring at the skies and gasping the name of Maryx.

When I arose and understood it seemed to me as if the Tiber ran blood, and as if all Rome rocked with the throes of an earthquake.

Maryx dead!

It seemed to me as if the very earth must groan aloud, and the very dogs of the streets weep.

Why had I broken the steel in Venice?—I cursed my imbecility and my feebleness of purpose, I cursed the mother that had borne me, a fool only fit to bring ruin on all lives that I honoured and loved!

"It is I who have murdered him—I!" I cried loud to the terrified crowds.

Fortune had blessed him for five and twenty years, and I had bade him pause that day by the Wingless Love!

I remember how bright the noon was, how the fresh winds from the sea rushed by, how the little birds were singing, and how the swallows and the pigeons were whirling and darting above the waters; and he was lying dead, he whose thoughts and whose labours had been strong as Hercules, and as Adonis beautiful!

He was dead—dead—dead—the great soul of him gone out into nothingness as the flame of the lamp he had struck down had been quenched in the darkness.

An awful silence seemed to fall on Rome.

There were so many wept for him.

And none could be found who dared tell his mother for me—they say that I was mad, as I had been that day when I had seen the white sail fade out of sight on the sea.

I had murdered him—that was all that seemed written to me, everywhere, on the sky as on a scroll, and on the streets as on tablets of stone. As the throngs of students and of poor rushed by me over the bridge, going to his beautiful home, where the sculptures were and the nightingales, to know if indeed this thing were true, I stood in their way and cried to them:

"Throw me in the river, it is I who killed him. I was the first to bid him look on her face!"

And they did not understand me and pushed me aside, and I fell, and some of them trampled on me as they rushed onward. When I rose, bruised and crushed, a sudden memory struck across my heaving brain.

The one for whom he had died she must not know! oh, she must never know! I said to myself; yet how keep from her what all Rome mourned, how deafen her ear to the woe that was a whole city's?

I staggered up to the house on the Golden Hill, why, I know not, only as all Rome was flocking there; there was a great multitude before the gates, and there were throngs of his own friends in the green garden ways.

The old blind woman within heard the noise of the many feet, and nodded her head.

"That is all the princes come for him, I dare say: he lives

with the kings, you know," and then, for she grew childish, she sent her maids about: "Go, tell them he is not home, but he will be home to-night; yes, to-night. I bade him not be long."

And no one could be found who would tell her the truth. When at last a priest told her, she would not believe. She shook her head.

"Dead before *me?* Nay, nay, God is good."

When the priest sadly insisted, she would not hear.

"Look you," she said to him: "the marble killed them all, and the marble took the soul out of him, but God would not take his body too. No, because I should be all alone; God is too good for that."

And she told her beads, and they could not make her believe, since she was sure that God was good.

I crept back to my stall, shivering in the full summer heat.

By evening I sent the Greek lad, who only lived to do her any service if he could, to say to the people of Giojá that I was unwell and would be with her on the morrow, bidding him caution those about her to keep the truth from her ear. I had no fear she would come out into the streets. She seldom went abroad, for when she needed air there was the great garden of her own dwelling, and she never now left its gates.

The night and the day and another night passed. I sent the lad with messages to her to say that I was still sick, and should scarce be able to traverse the city for a few days: I felt as if I could never look upon her face and think of him, and hold my silence—and surely to know the truth would kill her. I could not tell what to do.

It seemed to me as if the earth could never hold so much woe and still go on, through the air, round the sun, and bring the seasons one by one, and the birth of the children.

On the third day they brought his dead body home to Rome. Great artists came with it. They laid the bier down in the north room: they laid it beneath the Apollo Citharœdus.

"A great man is dead," they said, "and there are none living that are like to him."

It was serene midsummer weather.

Outside, under the arbutus and laurel, his nightingales were still flooding the evening air with their music; his roses were blooming, his doves were sleeping under the leaves, his aloes were unsheathing fresh blades in the light; the sunrays and the moonrays wandered by turn across the marble floor, all night

long the birds sang—the birds he had loved to hear,—and he lay dead there in his leaden shroud: under the Apollo of the Lute.

The people came there and stood there in large quiet crowds, at times weeping and wailing, for all Rome had honoured him.

His charities had been liberal as the fragrance of the summer, and the young and the old mourned one with another, saying, 'To be in need was to be his friend:' but neither the lamentation of the people nor the song of the nightingales could reach the ear that was deaf for the first time to their sorrow and to their song.

He was dead: and Hilarion had killed him.

I said it over and over to myself, again and again and again, kneeling on the threshold of the room by the side of Giulio: and still it seemed to me impossible; still it seemed to me that, if indeed it were so, the earth must stand still, and the sun cease to rise.

The lights burned around the bier; the shutters were closed; the nightingales sang without, we could hear them;—in her own chamber his mother sat and told her beads and said—"Dead? Nay, never! God is too good for that."

I did not know how time went. I seemed to have knelt there for ever and ever; the candles were like clusters of stars; the faint singing of the birds was like a child's dream of angels; the Apollo leaned above on his mute lyre; and in the midst was Maryx dead.

I suppose two or three nights had passed, and still he lay there for the sight of the Roman people, and the multitudes came and went, softly, and weeping, until out of all the great city there were few left who had not bent their knee there where he lay, and gone down, away under the stars, through the cypresses, saying, that earth had not his like.

Once I heard the voice of a woman, saying: "There is one whom I pity more than he: it is the man who slew him."

Were there women who pitied Hilarion?

Doubtless some women pitied Cain.

In the gloom, whilst the lights were burning still, some one raised me at last, and thrust me out from the doorway, and there were torches like a great fire, flaring and flaming under the warm summer skies, and making the moonlight red; and there were voices chanting, and black robes and white, and the nightingales were frightened and dumb: then I knew that the end was come.

I stumbled out by the side of Giulio, and together we went down the green garden paths, under the boughs, over the fallen orange flowers that were like snow upon the ground: for the last time we followed him.

His fellow sculptors bore his pall, and the youths of the Villa Medici were his first mourners. Behind them were the crowds of Rome, the illustrious and the beggar side by side.

Thus was his body borne down the Golden Hill for evermore, over the bridge, across the water, in the hush of the night, and out of the city gates, beyond the walls, to the burial-ground by San Lorenzo.

I had so little sense left in me, so little consciousness, save that I was alive, and stumbled on in the midst of the multitudes, with the thousands of flaming torches, and the ten thousand stars of light that even the poorest hand had found means to carry there, amidst the dull slow sound of the rolling wheels of the princes and the tramp of the feet of the poor, and the sighing moan of the chants as they rose and fell, that I never remembered that the funeral must pass on its road by the tower which stood near to the Gateway of Honorius.

When I remembered, the torches were already burning on the wind under the very walls: I screamed aloud, but who should have heard, or hearing would have heeded?

I looked up: her casements were all open: she was awake in the lovely summer night that was near on its twelfth hour.

The people rolled on like the heavy waves of a sea, and the flare, as of fire, illumined the silent solitary way: I was borne on with the throngs onward and onward to the field of tombs.

There the earth yawned and the grave took him.

I know not how long a time had gone when the multitudes passed backward to the city, leaving him there alone.

The torches were burning low; old men were weeping like little children, the children in their fathers' arms were silent and afraid; the sorrow of all Rome was his requiem.

As the crowds bore me with them through the gates, in the starlit midnight, the people nearest me gave way; a shadowy white figure came through the press, and I saw the face of Giojà —there—unveiled, in the dull red glow of the torchlight.

"Who is it—dead?" she asked, and her voice seemed to me to come from afar off as if from the heights of the air or the depths of the graves.

Before I could answer her, Giulio spoke: willing to slay her if the words would slay.

"Maryx is dead. Whom else should all Rome mourn? Your lover killed him—for your sake."

CHAPTER XLIII.

THE summer went on; the nightingales of Maryx sang on under the rose thickets, and the glossy leaves of the laurels; the rank grass grew on his grave, and it was marked by one vast rough block of white marble, as though to say, that no hand after his dared carve the rocks; his mother, blind and in dotage, sat and told her wooden beads, and smiled and said always: "Dead! Nay, nay; God were too good for that."

Rome was empty and silent as the grave, and only the hot winds were left to wander, unquiet, through the deserted streets.

And she—my Ariadnê,—was dying slowly as the summer died.

"You have killed her!" I had said to Giulio that night.

"So best," he had answered me; for his soul was set against her as a thing accursed; he, who had seen the blows of the mallet shatter the copy of the Nausicaa.

The wise men whom I brought to her, said there was no disease; there may have been none; but none the less I knew that her life was over, and the Greek lad knew it too, because he loved her. From that night when she had seen the funeral of Maryx pass beneath her walls, and learned by whom he had been slain, she seemed to droop just as a flower will; there is no decay that you can see; the blossom is lovely, and its leaves young, and the dews of morning are on it, but, nevertheless, it fades—fades—fades, and you know that in a little while you will rise some day and find it dead.

Who can measure what she felt?

Aëdon never had more innocence and more remorse—Aëdon who slew what she cherished in the dark, not knowing.

By her had death come to the one and crime to the other: had she been in the old days of Rome, she would have plunged

her living body into the yawning earth, or the leaping fires, to purify the souls of those whom she had cursed.

"Let me go to him!" she cried once; for it was still the living man of whom she thought the most, and perchance the woman in the crowd had been right; perhaps it was he who needed pity the most.

Then her head fell on her breast.

"I cannot," she muttered. "He will hate me for ever,—now."

She dared not go to him; she through whom, all innocently, his hands were red with the blood of his friend.

She was to herself accursed, and the death and the sin that had come by her lay on her innocent soul like lead, and under the ghastly weight of it the youth in her withered as the grass withers up under a heavy stone.

Day by day, slowly, the strength in her waned, and the loveliness of her faded.

To her none of the common excuses for his act would have been intelligible. She understood none of the customs and conventions that rule the world he dwelt in; she could not have comprehended why in the eyes of men he had done no wrong, but merely followed out his right in vengeance of a blow. She knew nothing of all this: she only understood that he had killed his friend—through her.

She, who would have dragged herself through seas of blood to save him from pang or shame, had brought this guilt upon her head: that was all she understood. For her Maryx had died. For her Hilarion was a murderer. This was all she knew. A sense of overwhelming and ineffaceable guilt fell upon her: she shrank away, ashamed and afraid, from the light of the day.

Of him I heard nothing save that he had not attempted to escape from whatever the laws of his fellows might do to him; that I heard. Justice! I laughed aloud as I heard. What could bring back the dead from the sepulchre? What could light again the divine fires of the genius he had quenched?

Justice!

Then I understood how men could grow cruel. Had his doom been in my hands, I would have made every breath a pang to him such as Dante himself never conceived in hell.

There is no justice upon earth: and hardly any vengeance. When we are young we hope for both; but we wait and wait,

and we grow old, and death comes, but on justice we never have looked. Death makes all men equal, say the preachers. Oh, terrible irony! Equal lie the murdered and the murderer.

Once more, and for ever, the sword and the clue of Athene dropped from her weary hands. Art ceased to exist to her; from the sight of the whiteness of marble she shrank as from the sight of a murdered creature; from the calm changeless eyes of the statues she fled as from the gaze of an avenging god.

She was innocent; yet the Erinnys pursued her, and night and day she had no rest. With each hot month of the summer the spirit within her seemed to faint more and more, and her body grew weaker and weaker, till at length she could not rise, but lay there still and mute as the young angels that lie on the tombs with folded hands and their wings drooped, waiting——

"Could I but suffer for him!" she said once; and it was still the living man that she meant. The dead was at rest; but he——

I dared not say to her the thing I thought: that he suffered nothing, he who had slain men before this and only called it honour.

She lay there, I say, in the solitude of her chamber, and at last could not rise or move at all, and only saw the blue skies, and the changes of sun and of stars, through the high-arched casements barred with iron, with the blue veronica flowers hanging down them, and past them the pigeons flying.

The wise men said she should go from Rome, but that she would not do. Rome was to her as the mother in whose arms she would fain breathe her last.

From the height of her chamber even as she lay she could see the whole width of the city outspread, and the long dark lines of the pines on the hills, and the light which told where the sea was. She would lie and look, as the dying child looks at its mother's face.

No one said she was dying; they said it was weakness, and the hot heavy air of the summer. But I knew it, and Amphion, and Ersilia, whose fierce eyes clouded with the rush of tears whenever she looked upon her.

Whether she knew it herself I cannot tell; she had so little thought of herself. All her life had passed away to the dead in his grave and the living man with his sin. If she could have gone to Hilarion, I think she would still have found strength to live.

Out in the world of men, fame awaited her, for the myriad tongues of it made her their theme; and because her laurel had grown out of passion and death, the world spoke but the more of it, and was ready to crown as its reigning caprice this woman of so much loveliness and so much genius who had been so faithlessly forsaken and so fatally beloved.

But the world called in vain.

As well might the Satyrs and Sileni have tried to wake Ariadnê, dead on the shore, with the shaft in her breast.

Men came to me, great men and other men whose trade it was to chaffer in the works of genius; and they all told the same tale; and the trumpets of Fame were blowing loud in her honour yonder over the mountains, and Rome itself began to wake and say, "What daughter of mine is this that has the ancient strength and the ancient grace in her?"

But I heard them, and bade them go their ways.

They came too late.

The trumpets of Fame sounded but as the empty hooting of the gnats: the voice of Rome was as the voice of Niobe calling in vain.

"You come too late," I said to them; and my eyes were dry and my brain was calm; for the gods had done their worst, and the earth might as well have perished for aught that it held for me.

The summer wore away; the desert winds blew hotly, filled with sand, and driving it; and bringing the pestilence from the reedy swamps and the feebleness of slow sickness from the shallows of the river.

The vastness of Rome lay under the sun like a graveyard: Death had been digging there three thousand years, and had yet not done his labours.

The sky was like a brazen vessel, and the feet of the few passing people sounded always like the steps of muffled mourners burying their dead. By night in the white streets there seemed to be no other thing than the masked men and the torches and the dead.

It was not a sicklier season than any other, they said; but thus it seemed ever to me, and the noise of the fountains lost all melody to my ears, and sounded only a dull hollow murmur, as of a sea that could never wash out the crimes of the blood-stained earth.

I wandered stupidly to and fro, and nearly always, day and night sat on the threshold of her door, the dog beside me.

I could do her no good.

It is hard to suffer oneself; but not to be able to spare from suffering what we love—that is worse. She was almost always silent. Silence seemed to have fallen on her like a spell. From the night when Giulio had told her the hideous truth she had scarcely spoken, save once or twice, when she had cried out that she would go to him, by whom this death had come.

She grew stiller, whiter and whiter, day by day; nothing seemed alive in her save her great, lovely, lustrous eyes; her limbs lay motionless. At times I used to think that she was changing into the marble she had loved so much. At times I grew foolish and mad, and would go to the place where Hermes stood and call aloud to him to help her—he who had made women out of sport.

But neither from Hermes nor from any other god could any help come.

One day she broke her silence and said to me, "How long shall I live?"

I broke down and wept.

"As long as God wills!" I answered her, as any other would have done, since we are used to speak so—we who know nothing——

"But I am near death?"

"Oh, my dear! oh, my love! We cannot tell!"

"I can tell," she said slowly: then, for the first time since that awful night when she had heard of the death of Maryx, the large tears gathered in her eyes and rolled down her wasted cheeks.

"I thought to make him hear the nightingales," she said; and then her eyes closed and she was dumb once more.

She had thought that through her only the angels of the spring would fill his life, and she had brought him instead the curse of crime!

I kneeled down and kissed her slender hands, which had had strength to call out such noble shapes from the dull stone, and make it speak to men.

"Oh, my dear, you are innocent as the children unborn," I murmured. "How could you make him hear, when he loved best the laughter of devils!"

She sighed wearily and shook her head, her eyes and her lips were still closed. In her own sight she was guilty; guilty of having missed the way to hold his soul and keep it.

She had given all her life, but it had not been enough; it had not sufficed to hold his heart to hers one moment. With all her force she had striven; but evil had been stronger than she; it had beaten her, and when she had cried to the gods, they had been silent.

For what can be stronger than vileness, and of what avail is love?

I went out from her chamber and into the drouth and drought of the air. No rain had fallen for many weeks, and the wind was full of hot sand, and the air was full of the hissing and hooting of stinging things. The wise men on the threshold said to me, "Indeed, indeed, there is no disease, none at all that we can see."

And I seemed no doubt to be mad to them, for I said, in reply:

"Nay, nay, the laurel was set in her breast, and that kills, when the breast is a woman's. If not the temple of Lubentina, —then death. And the temple she would not enter. Were she vile she were living now, living and laughing and laughing loud!"

And I went and wandered the streets, and the dog followed me spiritless and sorrowful, and as we passed by the Greek lad, he said to me:

"In the verse that she once read to me they threw in the flames what they loved the best—see, I have broken my flute and burnt it. Will that please the gods she told me of? will they be appeased? will they save her?"

Ah, heaven! since ever the world began, men and women have been burning their treasures in vain, and never has any answer come.

It was a parching, sultry, misty day, with no sunshine, but a heavy heat everywhere; I wandered into the woods of Borghese, and into the halls and chambers of the sculpture, and stood before the Ariadnê. It seemed so cruel;—there was the bronze head, beautiful and strong, with the ivy leaves around it, and there it would stay no doubt century after century, in the light there, while she, its living likeness, would perish as a flower perishes plucked before its time.

Mine had been only a dream; nothing but a dream; and she had to die for that.

It seemed to me as if the lips of the lovely Thespian Love parted, and moved, and said, "For a great love the earth is too narrow; and where *I* am not, Death is kind."

I sat down in the Cæsar Gallery, and leaned my tired forehead on my hands, and wished that I had never wakened from my sleep that summer morning when the gods had spoken in my dream.

The place was solitary, and not a soul was near; the day was waning; through the iron bars of the casements the turf, burnt yellow by the sun, looked full of glare against the black dense shadows of the ilex leaves; the insects hooting in the branches sounded like the mocking of the fates; the bloated bestial emperors seemed to leer like living things. I thought the imperial wanton in her high chamber up above was surely laughing.

Ay, indeed, it must seem strange to harlots that a woman can so love that death is sweeter to her than fame or gold or homage, or the world of men, or any consolations of the senses and the vanities of life; it must seem strange, for what should faithless women know of Love, they who worship those poor base gods, Apâte and Philotes?

I leaned my head upon my hands, and shut out from my sight the grey and sickly day; pestilence was abroad in all those amber and brown glades of the scorched woods, and all that purple darkness of sweet shade: but that did not matter to me; it would harm me no more than it would harm the infant Herakles smiling in his lion's skin: when life is no longer a desire to us, it will stay with us faithfully.

I sat and thought, not of the bronzes or the marbles, but of the man who had come to me there, on that day of my dream, with the sunlight shining in his brave brown eyes, and smiling said, "Still before your Ariadnê? And if it be an Ariadnê, who cares for her? She could be consoled."

But this my Ariadnê had refused all consolation, and he—the man to whom Fortune had been good for five and twenty years—was dead.

I sat weary and stupid in the grey sultry air, before the feet of the white Dionysos, thinking only of the great life that had gone out like the flame of a lamp, and of the young life that was fading slowly, dying as the summer died, unreconciled and unconsoled, though the hoary Silenus of the world had brought her the foaming wine of fame, and the god that is art had descended to her.

I felt weary and stupid: a step came to me over the marble floor; I looked up, and it would not have seemed to me strange

to have seen the gods arise, as I had seen them in my dream. I looked up, and I saw Hilarion.

How can I tell what I felt?

I put out my hands and thrust at the mere air, as on impulse one would do seeing some deadly shape in the darkness. He stood between me and the bronze Ariadnê.

The strange colours of the light, yellow and grey and weird, fell upon his face: I raised my voice to curse him, to curse him in his uprising and his downlying, in his present and his future, in life and in death, as men of old cursed what they abhorred. But something in his face stopped me, and froze the torrent on my lips: it was the face of a man on whom every curse of God and men had already fallen. It was the face of one who had killed his best friend: those who have looked on the like can understand—no other can.

He stood erect, and his old proud grace was unchanged because it was in him as it was in the statues around, but his beauty was like the bruised, faded, worn beauty of a marble that has been subject to every storm and scorch of weather through long years, and his eyes had the piteous beseeching humiliation of a man vanquished and loathsome to himself.

I could not curse him then; no more than I could have struck a wounded prisoner whose hands were fettered: there was that on his face which told me that the woman in the crowd had been right, when she had pitied him more than the man he had slain.

He spoke first, and his voice had lost all its accustomed melody, and sounded faint, yet harsh.

"Say nothing to me," he muttered. "You can say nothing that I have not heard night and day, ever since, in the air, all around. Say nothing—tell me where she is?"

I was silent: to me it was so horrible to be face to face with him, that he enchained me only by his gaze, as they say that some great snakes do. And he was so changed! Great God, so changed! as the white Dionysos would have been, dragged through flame and carnage and the smoke of war.

He spoke again.

"I came as soon as I was free. Where is she?"

"What is she to you?" I said. "You never loved her!"

My mouth felt dry as if drink had not passed my lips for days; I could scarcely shape my words to cast his own against him.

"I never loved her; no! The greater my curse."

His voice was faint, and had a strange sound in it. In his eyes there was a look that woke a bitter pity in me,—pity I thrust away as vilest wrong to Maryx and to her. I mastered it.

"Go you your ways," I said to him. "You have done nothing that will make you unfit for your great world; nothing against honour or the codes of men. Go. The dead are dead. Women will not love you less; nor men less feast you. Nay, you will have a charm the more for both. To me you are a murderer, but not to them. I am an ignorant man, and low and poor, and do not understand. Go—that is all I ask of you."

He stood with his head bent patiently; he was humble before me as a slave before his master, he,—who had treated the world as a dog, and lashed it and kicked it, and had had it fawn on him the more, for all his careless and audacious insolence.

"You must say what you choose," he muttered. "It is waste of words. You cannot say to me what I have not merited. I have taken a life that was beside my own, as Christ's beside a Satyr's!——"

His face had a strange convulsion on it; the blood seemed to burn on his brow, and leave his lips an ashen white; he put his hand to his throat as though some other hand were there and choking him.

"Go and forget," I said to him. "It has been your boast—you have no memories, you do not choose to have; you have mocked at poor illiterate fools who spoke of regret or conscience. Go; write a poem on it; you have often said the poet should use the sufferings of others for his lamp, as, southward, they kill fireflies to read with: that is all."

"You are cruel," he said simply, and with his old cold accent; but he stood patiently; even in my loathing of him some shame of myself stirred in me; I had struck a wounded man, and one who was at my mercy.

"Go! why will you not go?" I cried to him furiously. "Why come here to insult their graves? Is the world not wide enough that you must drag your crimes to Rome? Rome loved him, leave him alone to her. Go, I say. You are soilless enough, as the world sees,—your world,—nay, you will seduce women all the easier for that blood upon your hand. Most women are but beasts of prey, and love the smell of carnage. I am cruel? How many have cried that out against you, and when have you ever hearkened? What was your pity, ever?

What was a dead love to you? You cast your porca præsentanea after it, and buried it, and thought no more—except to smile. Why cannot you smile now? Be true to yourself. Nothing matters. You can make the world weep, you laughing all the while. Ay, you are right. His life was to yours as Christ's to a Satyr's: one day of his brought forth a harvest that all your barren years can never show. He blessed the nations: you have cursed them. He loved: you betrayed. He lived for all mankind: you for the narrow kingdom of your senses. And you have killed him—*you*. But in a twelvemonth you will have forgotten—why will you stand there? You will have forgotten: you will tell the world the story in sonorous verse—and then forget. Go, before I do worse to you; I am old and would not offend Heaven."

He stood quite silent—silent and patient, and with the discoloured paleness as of bruised marble on his face. Then suddenly he put out his hands with a pathetic gesture, almost like a timid child's, and a great sob heaved his breast.

"Have some mercy. Do you not see?—I suffer!"

There was silence between us.

I understood that he did suffer, passing all power of man to make him suffer more.

A compassion that I could no longer combat stole into me. Ah, if Maryx, lying in his grave, could have seen into my soul, he would not have been angered; he would have pitied his murderer too.

There was stillness between us.

He leaned one hand on the pedestal of the Dionysos, and stood with his head and shoulders bowed so that I could not see his face.

The day was declining; the shadows were growing dark: they began to veil the bronze of the Ariadnê.

"Where is she?" he said suddenly.

"What matter to you?" I said to him.

"Can you not understand?" he said, and his laboured breath seemed to choke him as he spoke. "If she do not shrink from me—if I do not appal her—what atonement I can make I will. I never loved her—no. He did; as no other man could have done. I never loved her; but her message in the marble—that I understood. She loves me: no other woman could ever love like that. If she do not shrink from me, what I can do I will. What honour, what peace, what amends I can render

her I will give. Beside her innocence, her holiness, I am vile indeed; but since she clings to me thus, I shall have power to console."

I made him no answer.

It seemed to me as if all the devils of hell swarmed in the beautiful marble chamber, and jibed and laughed and mocked around us, crying, "All things come too late!"

I looked up at him. The day was at an end; the dull red glow of a clouded sunset shone through the iron bars of the casement, and bathed the feet of the white sculptures as in a sea of blood.

"You would do this?"

He answered:

"By his life and by his death I swear it—yes.

I turned my face to the sunset and I said to him, "Come!"

I went out of the halls and through the glades of the wood. He walked beside me. The bells of the city were tolling far the last hour of light. Around us were greyness and darkness.

Away in the great west that fronted us as we passed down into Rome was the glow of the sun that had sunk; behind the dark trees of the Vatican there were long low lines of tremulous luminance, and a vast field of pale, soft blue, and above it a deep flush like 'the awful rose of dawn.'

He closed his eyes as all its beauty met them. Never more could he look with calm gaze at all the lovely mysteries of the air, or watch with peace the glories of the sky.

We passed without a word through the entangled streets of the city.

At last we reached her threshold, and climbed the winding stair.

It was almost dark: they had lit one lamp. There was the cry of the owls in the dusk.

I opened her door. She lay quite still as I had left her; the dim gold of her curls fell over the broad low brow that was the brow of Ariadnê; her lips were slightly parted; her eyes gazed at the western sky: where she looked, there was still a pale radiance and a flush left by the dead day.

I signed to him to enter.

He entered; and looked.

"My God! She is dying!" he called aloud, with a cry that rang through all the lonely house.

She heard his voice, and sprang up on her narrow bed, and stretched her arms to him.

He sank on his knees beside her.

"You can forgive?" he cried to her.

In answer her white and wasted arms stole about his throat, and her lips sought his.

"Live, oh live!" he moaned as he knelt. "Live for me—I love you!"

And for the first time he told no lie.

She made him no answer, but her arms rested about his throat, and her cheek was against his own. For a few moments she lay thus; then with a little sigh she moved a little and lifted her tender weary eyes to his.

"Forgive *me*—I missed the way!" she murmured faintly while her sight grew blind. Then her lips sought his once more, and on his own they trembled one moment longer, then grew cold and still.

He loved her—and she was dead.

L'ENVOI.

I SIT by the fountain in the wall, and the water has no song for me. The years have gone by; and I cease to count them. He lives and he cannot forget, and he loves what is dead. The world seems empty, and the skies are dark. All around me I hear the Satyrs laughing, the Satyrs who could not net the soul of Ariadnê. They blow on their pipes, and the mad world dances: yet all they sing is for ever but this:

"All things come too late!"

THE END.

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